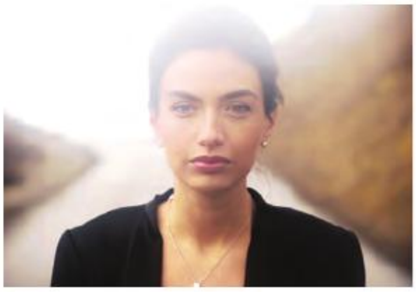
Before you view a film, think about the effort that goes into making that film…This is exactly where we stand right now – uniting our efforts in order to nurture a new wave of Georgian filmmakers.

In the history of Georgian film, there have been countless memorable and thought-provoking scenes that that have given us a rich cinematic heritage. Yet due to the complex and winding path of Georgia's geopolitical history, the local film scene has recently gone through turmoil stemming from economic, infrastructural and professional difficulties.

More than 15 years were lost during the difficult transition from the Soviet planned economy to market economics. The Soviet mind-set did not include the profession of creative producer – production skills disappeared and technical facilities got outdated. It was difficult - barely possible - to retain the country's filmmaking culture.



On the other hand, film still is a unique medium that does not simply fade away. As a powerful art form, Georgian cinema remained close to the heart of the cultural sector. Prominent film personalities (Eldar Shengelaya, Otar Iosseliani and others) did not lose hope and lobbied for filmmakers' interests in the early 2000s. The process resulted in a key policy decision taken in 2000 – the establishment of the Georgian National Film Center as a policy institution of public law. This showed the state's commitment to preserving film as a unique cultural field and its readiness to improve Georgian film's position on the creative, technical and economic levels.

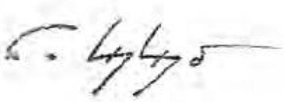
This is where our story began – or rather restarted – endless hours of working on funding systems, pitching for increased budgets, establishment of internal departments, improving skills and better positioning Georgian film talent. Being a complex art form, the reanimation of Georgian film demanded the full attention and dedication of policy makers, practitioners and creative people.

The process is still underway. However, we are now confidently speaking about the present of the Georgian film sector and envisaging a prosperous future. We have reached a level where past history is not the only asset of the film scene; now we are nurturing young talent and trusting them to be ambassadors of the new wave of Georgian filmmakers.

"BEST of FILMPRINT 2011" is the story we wish to tell you… It covers one year of film activities in Georgia: GNFC policy decisions, new partnerships and international friendships. You will learn about the early steps of inter-sectoral cooperation of film talent, our strategies for improving local skills and our improved international promotion plan. GNFC is working on a strategy of national film sector development and we are proud to have the Ministry of Culture of Georgia as a lobbying government institution.

We do hope that you will believe in us and support our efforts to advance the film sector by expressing our readiness for cultural cooperation internationally, bridging across talent at the national and international levels, and last but not least inviting you to explore the wider artistic scene of Georgia.

Thank you for reading our first English-language magazine, BEST OF FILMPRINT 2011!



Nicholas Rurua
Minister of Culture
and Monument Protection of Georgia

Tamara Tatishvili
Director of Georgian National
Film Center

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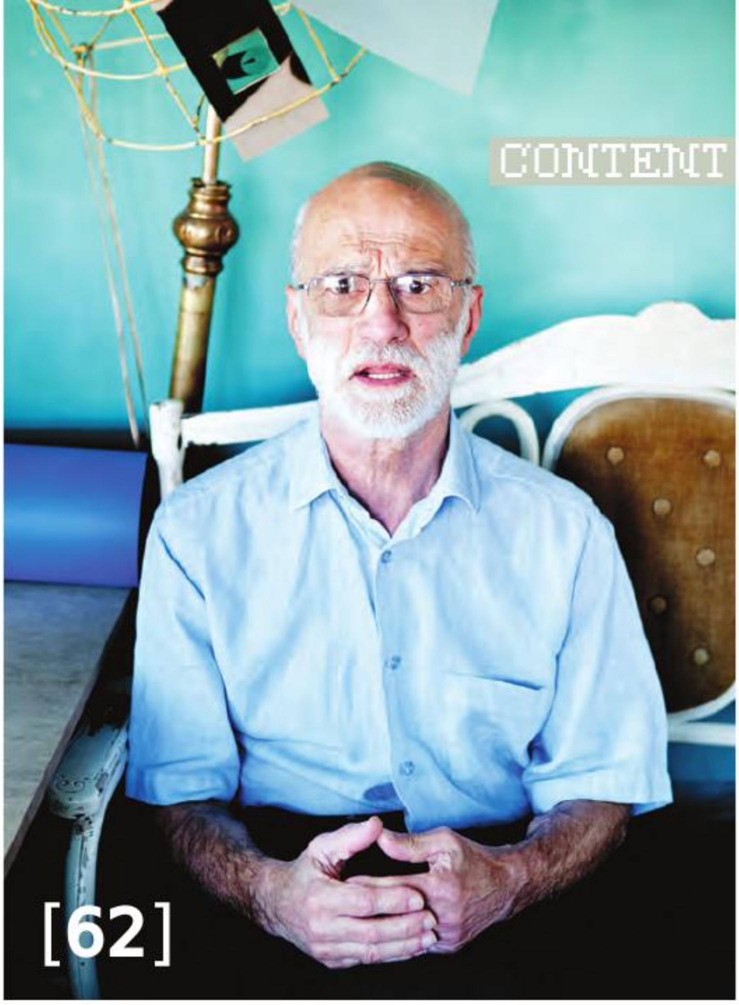

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Berlinale Chronicles
Specially from Berlin >> Mariam Kandelaki

Each of the past ten years I have had the opportunity to attend the Berlin International Film Festival and observe its events.

The Berlinale is an extremely interesting and versatile festival, held every February in the capital of Germany. It lasts for 10 days. The festival was established in 1951, just as the devastated and war-torn country was beginning its revival.

The Germans were well aware of the fact that the revival of the country should, above all, include a revival of culture, so the Berlin Film Festival was established as a broad and ambitious cultural event.

The main prize is the Golden Bear. The festival consists of seven competition programs: Main Competition, Forum, Panorama, Generation, Perspective Deutsches Kino, Berlinale Shorts.

In addition, there are non-competition programs such as Retrospective and Culinary Cinema.

The main competition often involves films by prominent directors featuring established stars.

Also, the organizers of the festival aim to discover new names and faces, therefore, filmmakers making their debut are allowed to participate.

Georgians are known at Berlinale, especialy by aword-winning films. In 1993 a Silver Bear was awarded to Georgian director Temur Babluani for the film "The Sun of the Sleepless". In 2002 a Silver Bear was awarded to Otar Ioseliani's "Monday Morning".

Forum presents creative, experimental, avant-garde films of diverse formats. This section screened Levan Ghlonti's feature film "Day" in 2001.

For 30 years Forum was organized by Erika and Ulrich Gregor, great admirers of Georgian cinema, who have contributed a lot to the promotion of Georgian films worldwide.

Panorama focuses on non-commercial and alternative feature, documentary and short films. Generation is a competition for young filmmakers. In 2009 Panorama presented Giorgi Ovashvili's feature film "The Other Bank", and in 2010 - Rusudan Pirveli's "Susa".

Retrospective focuses on earlier masterpieces of cinema. For instance, this year the program was dedicated to Ingmar Bergman. Within the framework of this program, a meeting with Bergman's favorite actress Liv Ullman was held.

Thus, the Festival embraces various competition and non-competition programs. Numerous events are organized within the framework of the festival, namely, the European Film Market, workshops, press-conferences, parties and exhibitions. All these events are interesting and useful both for professional filmmakers and ordinary audience.

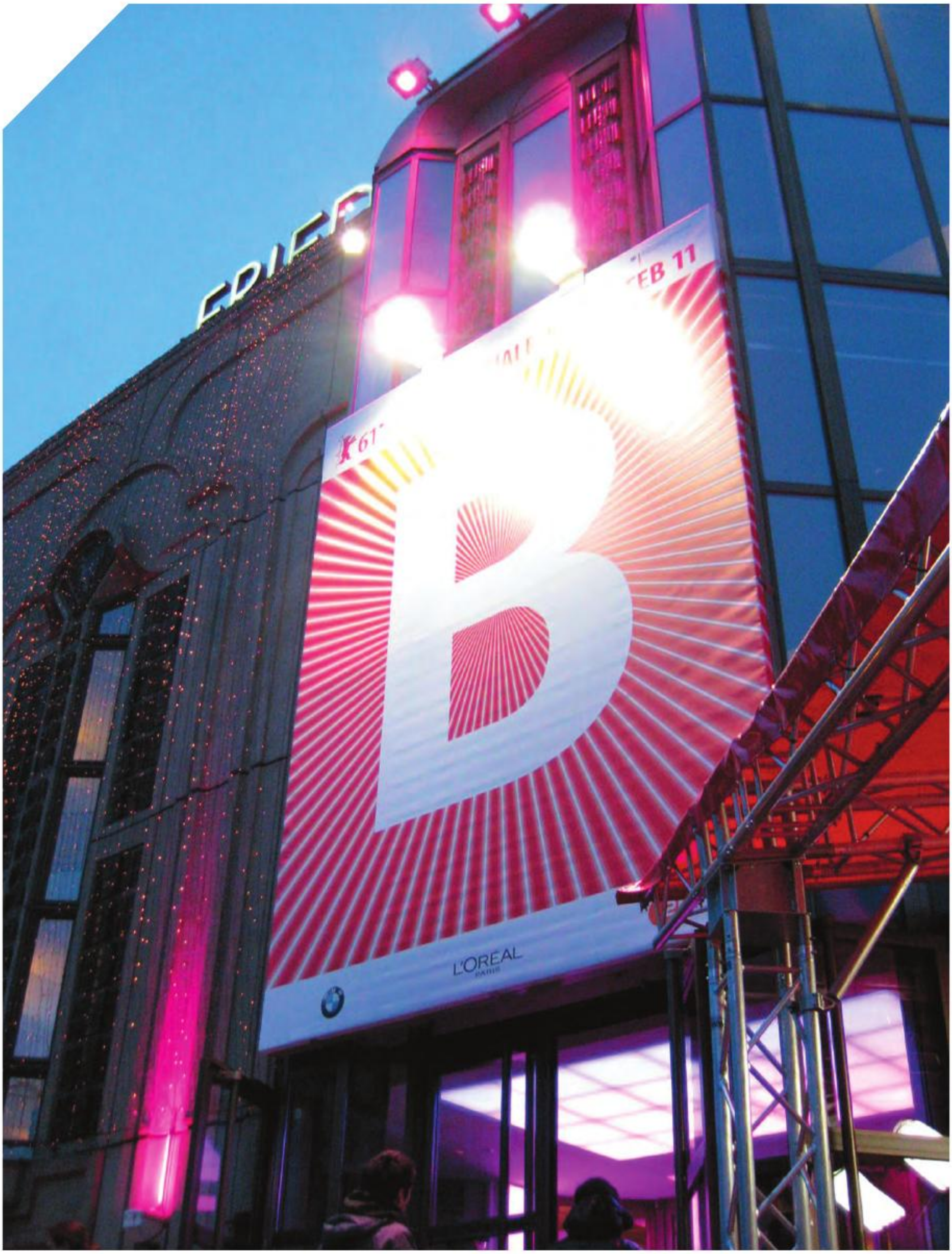
Unfortunately, gradually the complex network of social relations began to disappear among the participant and winner films of Berlinale and interesting artistic images faded. The in-depth vision was gradually replaced by a superficial attitude. Instead of vivid artistic images, there appeared a collection of results of human activities, totally subject to the political vision of the author. A living human being was replaced by scheme, concept, politics that dominated over the artistic image. This often resembled the weaker works of Soviet cinema.

I remember reading a quotation of Italian script-writer Cesare Zavattini in one of the earlier issues of the Russian-language "Film Art" magazine: "In Moscow we watched many films that puzzled us. We were unable to grasp the genre of these films! A film seems realistic, yet the main character is shot 10 times, he falls 10 times and gets up 10 times".

The process is similar today, especially in American films that remind me a scene from Mikheil Tumanishvili's staging of the play "Chinchraka" in which a giant (plays by Sergo Zakariadze) empties a pistol magazine shooting at Kosiko (Ramaz Chkhikvadze). The scene ends with Kosiko saying: "What have you done, you could have shot me!" We all laughed watching this scene.

In contemporary films, instead of one giant we see a hundred warriors, tanks and helicopters shooting at the main character. However, the latter escapes all bullets and bombs, and the audience is expected to take all of this seriously.

To tell the truth, most of the films at the Berlin festival were not like this. The main focus was made on political issues, but this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is not the chief drawback of these films.

In my opinion, the main shortcoming is the lack of creative thinking in these films. Their authors focus on what to say rather than how to say it, and, as you know, there is no art without "how".

I got the impression that the artistic vessel of cinema has been sunk by politics. These films reveal a certain resemblance to Soviet films. There were also films claiming to have created complex artistic forms, but in fact this was a mechanical mixture of technological innovations.

But all the above-mentioned refers to the past. This year's festival proved that an important step has been made towards human lives and relations. This, in itself, is a significant step towards art, because the color spectrum of the movements of human soul is a basis of cinematographic painting i.e. the art of cinema.

This year's Golden Bear was awarded to an extremely interesting work by Iranian director Asghar Farhadi - "Nader and Simin: A Separation". This is a film about a family drama and, due to the wonderful acting and artistic vision, the theme is generalized, hence, the film is about human existence and the drama of life.

The Silver Bear was awarded to a very interesting film by Hungarian director Bela Tarr called "The Turin Horse". Together with German-Hungarian director of photography Fred Kelemen, the director created an impressive work of cinema with strong dramaturgy and amazing imagery. Bela Tarr is so unique and original that he is sometimes referred to as "An Island of Cinema".

A film by a famous director Wim Wenders, "Pina", was shown in a non-competition program. This is a three-dimensional documentary with the choreography of an amazing German dancer, Pina Bausch. Wenders proved that new technologies can be used not only in commercial American movies but also in art house films where they naturally mix with art and are not perceived as artificial effects.

The three-dimensional nature of "Pina" created the impression of attending a live theatrical performance and not just watching a documentary film.

Apart from watching films, the participants of the Festival have the opportunity to attend a weeklong European Film Market, which is a gathering of filmmakers, buyers, distributors, producers and representatives of various film foundations worldwide.

The Georgian National Film Center has been taking part in this important market for the past six years. Each year there is noticeable growth of interest towards Georgian cinema. The Georgian stand enabled Georgian directors and producers to present their works and projects. They met representatives of various festivals, sales agents, producers and film foundations.

This year a reception was held at the Georgian stand in Berlin. The guests were addressed by TamarTatishvili, director of the Georgian National Film Center, and Gabriela von Habsburg, the Georgian ambassador to Germany.

The guests showed great interest in Georgian films and in the country in general.

Hopefully, in future, Georgian filmmakers will further increase this interest and Georgian films will successfully participate in the International Film Festival in Berlin. **fp**

CANNES

Cannes >> Zaza Rusadze

No award in the main competition of a film festival can ensure commercial success. A film may become a favorite of a festival jury, the press and the audience, but one can only speculate about its profitability. Solid financial guarantees are the sole prerogative of the Festival in Cannes. If a film gains "The Golden Palm", it will immediately attract the attention of numerous spectators at the movie theaters. Even for those authors and producers who are irritated and upset about globalization, the perversity of commercialization of films and the stagnation of cinema, the international film festival in Cannes is still the main target.

Cannes is a small town in the South of France. Once a year it is in the focus of filmmakers and spectators from across the world. Film professionals make plans, negotiate the schedule of meetings and then pack their luggage to travel to Cannes in hopes of success. The festival in Cannes is the key film event each year. The Cote-d'Azur is a precondition for sunny weather and a favorable atmosphere for business visits. The charming coastline town turns into the center of the filmmaking whirlpool.

The festival is diverse, as are its guests. Here one can meet famous producers, directors and representatives of film funds. Their business meetings are scheduled in detail, down to the minute. Cannes is also visited by dreamers who hope to attend exclusive parties and make radical advances in their careers; film critics who look forward to new films and watch cynically the negotiations of sales agents. Teenage girls often scream upon seeing film stars at the entrance of a hotel.

However, the key attribute of the Festival and the main issue under discussion is money. In Cannes, money makes the world go round. The marvelous buildings of the town are decorated with advertising posters. In the evenings, guests wear expensive garments. The organizers compete to provide the most diverse menus. During the festival huge sums of money are passed from hand to hand. Films are sold and bought. After the commercial marathon is completed, the guests pack their luggage and return home to complain about the corruptness of the festival. These complaints often resemble conspiration and can be summarized in one sentence - everything had been decided in advance.

Much is indeed decided in advance. The Cannes Festival has its favorites: films by some directors are not even completed, but their participation in the main competition is already agreed upon. Even though "The Palme d'Or" is a guarantee for a film's commercial success, it is possible that quite unexpectedly a low-budget film made by an unknown director will gain the main prize. Like the economic models dominating in the world, the festival tries to overcome the existing deadlock by means of innovation.

The Festival is constantly renewed, and in this way suspicions and criticism are somewhat offset. This was the case in 2007 - Cristian Mungiu's film "4 Months, 3 Weeks, 2 Days" was awarded the Palme d'Or, leading the entire world to discuss the new wave of Romanian cinema. And, of course, the film enjoyed commercial success. The European and American audience bought tickets not to watch Ceausescu and Romanian problems; the reason was the interest and intrigue caused by the festival in Cannes and its main prize, which is the dream of all film professionals gathered in Cannes.

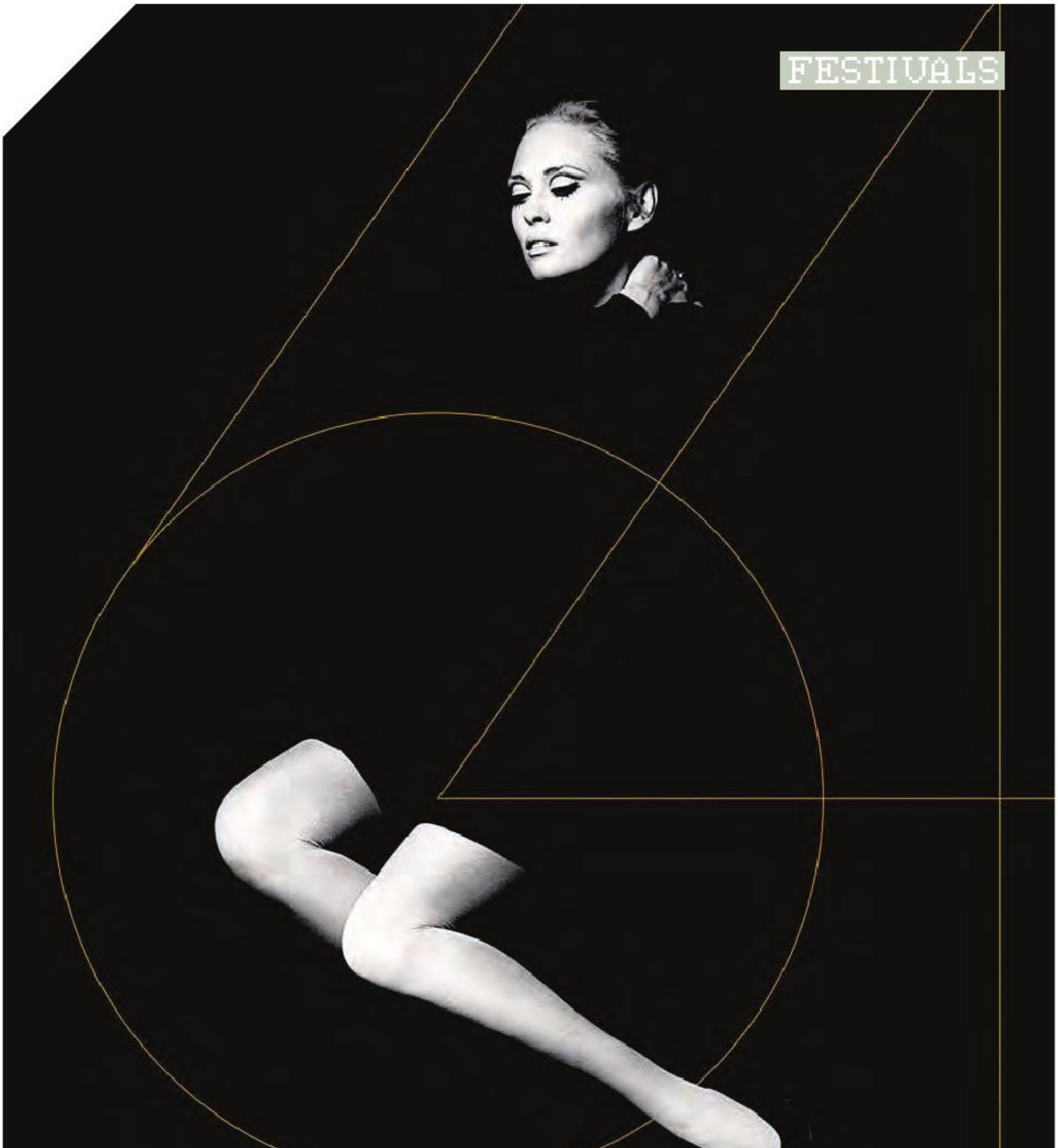
The main competition program and the world premiere of films is like a ritual for the organizers. The Red Carpet seems magic and mysterious, much like the huge Hollywood sign in LA, which seems magic on TV but at a close view is only a metallic construction. However, before a man discovers the truth himself, he is influenced by his own imagination or the interpretations of others.

Reality is simple and subject to concrete rules. One may attend premieres in Cannes in evening dresses or black suites and bowties. If one is dressed otherwise, they will tell him very politely that he cannot enter the hall. There are some women standing at the entrance who can turn regular neckties into bowties for a couple of Euros. Those who wish to attend a premiere will walk on the red carpet, like the authors.

Photographers are gathered around the carpet, trying to capture photos of famous people for various magazines. Ordinary guests of the festival share the blinding lights, the interest of photographers and the sound of cameras, and their wish to see the film becomes stronger.

After the screenings, Cannes drinks champagne and celebrates the ongoing industrial processes. Later, sales agents and distribution companies agree on the details of deals, rental strategies and film distribution issues. In the evening, the red carpet awaits the filmmakers again.

In 1987 Tengiz Abuladze's "Repentance" gained fame due to its success in the competition program of the Cannes Festival, earning the special prize of the jury and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Zaza Rusadze and Miroslav Mogorovich; David Vashadze and Salome Sepashvili

FIPRESCI prize. Back in the Soviet times and after the disintegration of the USSR, Georgian films flashed several times in the competition or non-competition programs of the Cannes Festival. However, no film has been as successful as "Repentance".

In 2000 the Georgian National Film Center was established and there appeared the hope for a revival of Georgian cinema. Since then state subsidies allocated for film production have grown. Naturally, these amounts are not enough and the growth of state financing is largely symbolic. Introduction of new models of film production has made it clear that Georgia seeks to join global industry processes. This is vital for the revival of Georgian cinema.

Attempts to demystify the Cannes Festival were made by Georgian film professionals several years ago. Based on the initiative of the Georgian Ministry of Culture and the Georgian Film studio, the Georgian pavilion opened its door to international guests in Cannes in 2007. Since then, the Georgian flag proudly flies in Cannes alongside those of other countries represented at the Market. Regular participation by Georgia in this significant process is often criticized, with some people asking: What is the use of such activity if there are no Georgian films participating in the main competition?

However, certain evolution is to be undergone before Georgian directors and actors appear on the Red Carpet in Cannes. Every year the Georgian delegation in Cannes studies the ways of development. The Georgian pavilion in Cannes serves the following objectives: promotion of Georgia as an attractive filming location; proposal of new Georgian films to representatives of other festivals; involvement of foreign producers into joint co-productions with Georgia.

In 2007 the Georgan pavilion was located far from the centre, in the neighbourhood of French TV channels and minor companies. Few guests visited the pavilion due to the minimal interest in Georgian films. But this was just a beginning and an attempt of the Georgian delegation to understand the infrastructure of the Festival. Later, the Georgian pavilion in Cannes was for foreign partners a signal of the active processes under way in the Georgian film industry.

Alongside the key players in the industry, numerous minor companies try to gain profit by providing hotel services, rental of yachts and villas, reservation of pavilions, rental of offices, helicopters and limousines, transportation and advertising services, and so on. The guests of the Festival, above all, need accommodation. So the inhabitants of Cannes let their apartments with pleasure, as during the two weeks of the Festival they can receive five times as much as during other periods. Local residents prefer to leave Cannes during the Festival.

Transportation in the narrow streets is a problem. Besides, local residents cannot afford to attend screenings. The tickets, unlike Berlin festival tickets, are not sold at the box office. Even filmmakers are often unable to attend the films they are interested in. On the other hand, many local residents find employment during the Festival. The locals are more interested in the financial side of the Festival than its cultural importance.

Setting up the Georgian pavilion in Cannes requires considerable expenditures. As I mentioned above, in 2007 the Georgian pavilion in Cannes was far from

Ketie Danelia;
Tamara Tatishvili and
David Vashadze

the center, but it 2008 it moved to the entrance of Palm Beach, which is near the main theater of the Festival and is accessible only for accredited guests and participants. They gather at Palm Beach to have lunch and negotiate business. While drinking champagne and enjoying the ice-cream and coffee provided by the sponsors of the Festival, they discuss future plans or personal matters. Personal contacts form a solid basis for business relations.

Opening the Georgian pavilion at Palm Beach was a decision of strategic importance, and in 2008 the number of the pavilion's guests increased considerably. The pavilion was proof of the activation of Georgian cinema, although the amount paid to the mediator company was large and disproportionate to Georgia's success in the film industry. In 2009 the mediator company offered the Georgian delegation to increase the number of guests by inviting Gerard Depardieu to the Georgian pavilion. However, that year world-famous stars did not appear in the Georgian pavilion.

The Georgian delegation held a press-conference at the Majestic Hotel, where film stars are accommodated during the festival. Foreign partners were familiarized with the idea for the tax incentives that would help attract foreign producers to Georgia. The guests were also introduced with a letter by Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili in which cinema was named as a priority in the country's development. Later, the guests of the Georgian pavilion expressed their opinion concerning the models that would enable them participate in the industrial processes in Georgia. The Georgian delegation realized the discrepancy between desire and reality and underlined the need for the elaboration of a film production development strategy. This happened on the terrace of the Georgian pavilion overlooking the Cote-d'Azur.

The joint strategic vision of the Ministry of Culture, Georgian Film studio and the Georgian National Film Center was based on an analysis of the reality observed during the festival in Cannes. The first stage of elaboration of the strategy started in February 2010, and in May of the same year the Georgian flag flew again in Cote-d'Azur as the Georgian pavilion awaited its guests. That year the number of guests increased even more. In 2011 the Georgian pavilion continued to advertise the country as an attractive location for films. The number of guests was significant, as film professionals worldwide had already acknowledged the existence of Georgian film industry.

They are now awaiting new Georgian films. The quantity and quality of films are still low taking into consideration the interest towards Georgian film industry. After a pause of decades, the industrial basis has been formed at the Cannes Festival for Georgian film industry. Currently it is an objective of Georgian filmmakers to use the complex industrial structure of the Cannes Festival to achieve their goals. Of course, the experience of several years does not guarantee success. In Cannes, much depends on luck. However, if the above-mentioned components are complemented by interesting, unique and original films, Georgian films could appear again at this festival of global importance. If a Georgian film manages to win the Palme d'Or, the prize in itself will be a guarantee of the film's commercial success. **fp**

The 46th Turn of the Crystal Globe

Report from the Karlovy Vary Film Festival

>> Keti Machavariani

David Koubik with wife, Manana Akobia, Gia Bazgadze, Constantine Rizhinahsvili, George Shvelidze and Tamara Tatishvili

Karlovy Vary is an old resort. Its old German name is Karlsbad (Karl's Bath). There are numerous toponyms related to Karl the 4th, King of Bohemia and Duke of Luxemburg: Karlsbad, Karlstein Castle, Karl Bridge, Karl Square and even a university bearing his name. The resort, founded in the fourteenth century, was donated to Czechoslovakia at the beginning of the 20th century. Then its name was changed to Karlovy Vary. Nowadays one hears mostly Russian speech in the streets of Karlovy Vary, as the resort is a favorite destination of the so-called "New Russians". Therefore, a major portion of the resort's property is Russian-owned. However, in the middle of July, the resort's idyllic life is enlivened by the noise of filmmakers and spectators from all over the world who gather here for the festival and film business.

The Festival has been held since 1946. It is one of the oldest festivals worldwide and is considered an "A Class" festival. Against the background of the events in the Eastern Europe in the 1990s, the Festival continued to attract high quality films and high profile guests. In past years the winners of the awards of Karlovy Vary Festival continued being successful at other festivals and won the titles of Best European films and even Oscars. Among these films, mention should be made of Sergei Bodrov's "Prisoner of the Caucasus", Caroline Link's "Nowhere in

Africa", Christophe Barratier's "The Chorus", Jean-Pierre Jeunet's "Amelie", Alain Berliner's "My Life in Pink".

The Festival is annually visited by film stars who add glamour to the joyful atmosphere of the Festival.

There are several competition and non-competition programs at the Karlovy Vary Festival: official competition, documentary competition, "The East of the West" (competition of Eastern European films). The best films in the competition section are awarded the Grand Prix - "Crystal Globe" (apart from the prize, there are monetary awards in the amount of 30,000, 20,000 and 10,000 USD). All the guests watch with interest as prominent filmmakers get awarded prizes for their contribution to the development of the cinematographic art.

During the Festival one can see images of the "Crystal Globe" everywhere – on billboards, fliers, at the entrance of the central festival hall, where people may take photos by statues of the Grand Prix award. Yet, the most interesting events occur in the hall – prior to each screening, the hall is lighted and each film is preceded by a masterpiece introduction – the film stars of the world play with the crystal globe in various contexts and situations. In 2011 the audience was entertained by clips with Jude Law and John Malkovich.

For me, the Festival is connected with special events: on the one hand, it is easy to write about it, as I attended it in 2011. On the other hand, it is difficult to analyze the Festival, as my film "Salt White" participated in the Festival's "The East of the West" section. It was both lucky and unexpected for me to receive an invitation from the Festival. This was the result of close cooperation between the producers of the film and Tamara Tatishvili – the director of the Georgian National Film Center. I waited for the months before going to the Festival and in that period I was involved in post-production (by strange coincidence, the post-production was completed in a studio in Prague), as the organizers of the Festival informed us in March about their decision to hold the world premiere of the film "Salt White" at the Festival.

In 2011, the Festival lasted from July 1 to July 9. The first to arrive were Gia Bazghadze, producer of the film and Kote Rizhinashvili, co-producer. Later they were joined by Tamara Tatishvili. Giorgi Shvelidze, the film's producer and director of photography, and I arrived on July 6 – the day of the premiere. The screening was held in the hall of Karlovy Vary National Theater. Apart from us, Festival was attended by the Czech crew members Ivo Marak and David Kubik.

After the introduction, as the screening started, I felt how I missed the rest of the crew, actors and one of the producers – Levan Korinteli, who greatly contributed to the success of the film. Both now, as I await the comments of Georgian critics during Tbilisi premiere, and then, in Karlovy Vary, I feared how a multiethnic audience would perceive the film and how many people would remain until the end of the screening. Fortunately, the patience of the audience in Karlovy Vary and their love for cinema won out and the audience stayed till the end. Of course, I am saying this as a joke... The organizers of the Festival noted that the program had missed Georgian films for the past years and, after a long pause, in 2009 the audience of Karlovy Vary got acquainted with new Georgian cinema, represented by Giorgi Ovashvili's "The Other Bank".

The Festival is the best place for film-makers as well as for selectors, sales agents and producers who select future films and projects. It was especially pleasant to meet the organizers of the Batumi Film Festival – Zviad Eliziani and Giorgi Gogiberidze. They had arrived in Karlovy Vary to select films for Batumi Festival 2011.

The screenings of "Salt White" were followed by response from organizers of other festivals too. So I hope the film will continue its festival life.

The Karlovy Vary Festival ended on July 9 with a red carpet and a ceremony with famous film-makers e.g. John Malkovich, John Turturro, Judy Dench and Remo Girone. The festival ended with the awards ceremony. The jury, chaired by a famous Hungarian director Istvan Szabo, awarded the Crystal Globe and monetary prize to Joseph Madmony's film "Restoration" (Israel, 2010).

The Special Prize of the Jury was awarded to Martin Sulik's film "Gypsy" (Czech republic/Slovakia, 2011). The Prize for the Best Direction was awarded to French director Pascal Rabate for "Holidays by the Sea" (2011). The Best Actor was David Morse for "Collaborator", directed by Martin Donovan, (Canada/USA 2010), the Best Actress Prize was awarded to Stine Fischer Christensen for the German film "Cracks in the Shell", directed by Christian Schwochow (2011).

"The East of the West" competition was won by Macedonian/Serbian film "Punk's Not Dead", directed by Vladimir Blazevski (2011). The Russian-American film "Generation P", by Victor Ginzburg (2011), was awarded a prize for unique vision.

The best full length (more than 30 minutes) documentary was "The Good Life" by Eva Mulvad (Denmark, 2010). The best short documentary was the Polish "Declaration of Immortality" (2010).

"The Crystal Globe" for the artistic contribution to the development of the cinematographic art was awarded to English actress Judy Dench. Goran Bregovic and John Turturro were awarded special prizes of the president of the Festival.

In 2012 Karlovy Vary will be enlivened by the festival for the forty seventh time, and lovers of spas and resorts will be attracted to the cinema halls. There they will see a story about the Crystal Globe performed by a film star and then cinema will start!

Hopefully, the future readers of "Film Print" will be told by another Georgian director about the screening of his/her film at Karlovy Vary. **fp**

Georgian Films at the 35th International Film Festival in Montreal

>> Davit Bukhrikidze

Despite the fact that the Montreal International Film Festival is old (it was established in 1976), it is referred to as a young festival in the context of the world's major festivals. This year the cultural capital of French-speaking Canada hosted its 35th festival. On August18-28 theaters screened 230 films from 70 countries. Unlike other festivals, Montreal's festival is experimental. The atmosphere is less luxurious and more businesslike, with modest snobbism. At least, this is the opinion of directors, critics and journalists.

The competition program was evaluated by a jury of seven members chaired by a famous Spanish director Vicente Aranda. The honorable guests were "porcelain star" Catherine Deneuve and Bertrand Tavernier, the author of a number of refined and versatile films. A retrospective of films by the great French director Claude Chabrol, who died last year, was organized at the festival.

The cultural center built in the 1970s under the aegis of UNESCO was used for practical purposes during the festival. A panorama of documentaries and films in the section "World in the Cinema Focus" was screened here. Clearly it was a great achievement that Georgian films participated in all three sections of the festival.

Nana Janelidze's documentary "Will there be a Theatre up There?!" and Konstantine (Mindia) Esadze's feature-documentary "Not White – Black" were screened in the documentary section. As Nana Janelidze said: "A festival does not include only film screening and competition programs. It is also important to participate in film markets, establish contacts with colleagues, arouse the interest of foreign producers, get invitations to other festivals. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the festival, although our diaspora was actively involved. As Zaza Chachkhiani told me, Kakhi Kavsadze's appearance in the hall caused a storm of applause...

"Will there be a Theatre up There?!" was screened three times and each time the hall was full of people. This is a sign of interest. We should also take into account that there is a huge diaspora of former Soviet republics in Canada – immigrants from Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic states... After Montreal I received invitations from Minsk, Ukraine (the Kiev Autumn festival) and the festival of Mediterranean States in Montpellier."

Keti Machavariani's 80-minute feature film "Salt White" participated in a special program "Focus on World Cinema". In 2009 Zaza Urushadze's film "Three Houses" achieved success in the same program. Incidentally, the producer of Urushadze's film was Keti Machavariani. The scripts of all the three Georgian films (Nana Janelidze's, Mindia Esadze's and Keti Machavariani's) were winners of a competition organized by Georgian National Film Center, as a result of which they obtained partial financing.

Keti Machavariani's film was shot in Batumi, therefore it has a seaside romance flavour, even though it is not devoid of acute social context. The main roles are performed by Nino Koridze and Gagi Svanidze. "Salt White" is about the lives of three totally different characters who meet accidentally, but the meeting determines their future fate. According to the official web-site, the film "also depicts the situation in contemporary Georgian cinema".

"The fate of the main characters is partially determined by the historical and social factors. The new economic system, crisis and ethnic conflicts in the post-Soviet space have altered the lives of my characters. The environment in which they live is in fact a struggle for survival. This hampers profound human relationships and earnest emotions. They live and act almost mechanically," says Keti Machavariani.

Mindia Esadze's hour-long documentary "Not White - Black" was screened several times in the documentary section. The film is about the hardships and dangers faced by Georgian car importers. It seems the director relies on his personal experience and tells about the dangerous adventure of bringing a car from Germany to Georgia, which ends in failure. Esadze not only directed the film - his first - he also came up with the idea for the script and was director of photography.

Even though Georgian films did not take part in the competition section, thanks to the Georgian diaspora they got broad

coverage. The DVD versions of the films were in the center of the film market and attracted the attention of producers. Thus, the 35th film festival in Montreal was fruitful for Georgian films although they were not in the competition.

Lastly, cinema lovers might be interested to know about the winners of the festival:

Best feature film – "Come as You Are" by Geoffrey Enthoven, a director from Belgium. This is a dramatic story about the feelings of disabled youngsters. The film was also awarded the Ecumenical Prize and Public Award.

Best director - Brigitte Maria Bertele for "Fire". The film's depiction of rape and violence against women was, for some reason, appreciated by the jury.

Special Prize of the Jury – "Chronicle of My Mother" (refined minimalist work of Japanese director Masato Harada).

Best Documentary – Marina Gladovskaya's "Bitter Taste of Freedom" (the story of slain Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya) and "Nicky's Family" by Romanian director Matej Minac (about the provincial life and social problems in Romania).

Special Awards for Exceptional Contribution to the Cinematographic Arts went to French star Catherine Deneuve, Canadian actress Ginette Reno and Canadian producer Victor Loewy. **fp**

Debut
Keti Machavariani

fp Keti, your film "Salt White" was awarded two prizes at the Cottbus festival: Best Debut and Best Male Actor – what were your emotions when they announced your film?

I was in Karlovy Vary when Cottbus selectioner Bernd Buder came to me, congratulated me on the premiere and asked me for a disk of the film. It was very important for me, as Buder is a Director Connecting Cottbus and one of the selectioners. of the Berlinale co-production market.

After returning from Karlovy Vary, my producer Sopo Bazghadze and I sent our new project to the Cottbus co-production market. Soon we got an invitation to Cottbus. Then I did not know I was in the competition program. Soon came an invitation from the Festival. I faced a dilemma, as later I was also invited by the Mannheim-Heidelberg Festival to participate in the competition program there.

The Festival of Mannheim is one of the oldest festivals, and is linked to famous directors like Fassbinder and Jarmush. However, nowadays this festival is not as popular as it used to be. So I remained faithful to Cottbus, as this festival is a significant platform for directors due to its co-production market. My choice turned out to be the right one. In Mannheim my film participated in a non-competition program. Meanwhile, we left for Cottbus.

In the first few days we were involved in the market and participated in meetings and discussions. Numerous European producers were there. Western producers look for Eastern European projects to cooperate with.

When I won the prize I was alone in Cottbus. The market was over and my producer Sopo Bazghadze and GNFC Deputy Director Salome Sepashvili had already left.

When I got the invitation to the awards ceremony, I learnt I would be sitting in the back row. Later on they told me a new invitation was awaiting me in my hotel room. It was for the fifth row. I thought it was a decision of the organizers to place all the participants in the front rows. I did not know any of the other participants, so I went to the ceremony and sat all by myself. A guy sitting in front of me was awarded a prize for a short film. A guy sitting beside me got the Jury prize. Suddenly they announced: Georgia – for the original representation of the country, wonderful music, etc, the prize for the Best Debut is awarded to Keti Machavariani.

This was the first prize... Usually they don't invite actors to Cottbus and the fact that Nino Koridze got an invitation was a good sign. Nino was unable to attend as she was giving birth to her baby at that time. Then they announced that Gagi Svanidze was awarded a prize for his restrained manner of acting. I was happy.

I did not manage to call Gagi from Cottbus and told him the news only when I got back. At first he did not believe me.

This is my first prize, and I am happy I got it at such a major festival. The first film is always very hard to make and it forms the basis for the second one. Last year Dima Mamulia was awarded the prize for the Best Debut, and this is very pleasing. I am fascinated by Mamulia's

Photo: Sopo Abashidze

Photo: Maka Kukulava

George Shvelidze, Keti Machavariani and George Giorganashvili on the shooting place of "Salt White"

"The Other Sky". Although it is not a Georgian project, I am glad that Georgians have been winning Cottbus awards for the last two years. No Georgian directors have been awarded Cottbus prizes for full length feature films except Dito Tsintsadze, who was awarded the Grand Prix in 2000 for his film "Lost Killers". Zaza Rusadze has been awarded a prize for a short film. I think all this proves success of new Georgian cinema, which is the result of recent film policy.

After Cottbus, the film traveled to the festival in Macedonia. I hope "Salt White" will achieve more success at various festivals...

fp Cottbus is one of the world's 50 top festivals and the second most significant festival in Germany. Please tell us your impressions regarding the festival itself.

The festival is high quality and well-organized. This year it focused on Russian cinema. The Chairman of the Jury was Alexander Rodnyansky, who is Zvyagintsev's producer and one of the most influential producers in Russia. He is Ukrainian and has good contacts with Georgia. I met him at the festival and he mentioned the success of Georgian films and his personal interest in Georgia. In general, the number of film-makers attending the festival speaks of its quality. In this respect, Cottbus is one of the best.

fp What can you say about this year's program? What are the new trends? What films and directors were of interest for you?

Unfortunately, I was unable to watch films, as I was chiefly involved in the co-production market. But I have obtained disks of the winning films and I will certainly watch them.

fp Cottbus focuses on the works of East European directors and its aim is to establish links and enhance cooperation between directors, producers and financiers. Was your success important in this regard? Did you get any proposals?

For me, Cottbus was the first step on the international arena. Sopo Bazghadze and I have a company named "Gogolebi". Sopo is the producer of this project. The initial version of the script is ready. Two French and two German producers have read it. The script should be developed further and presented at various markets. Let's see what comes of it...

>> Maka Kukulava

Photo: Sopo Abashidze

Production outlook

Pervasive Silence >> Davit Simonia

God-forsaken places, buildings and rooms are well-remembered by journalists and politicians. One such building is represented in "Bakhmaro", a film by Salome Jashi. But Salome is not a journalist or a politician -she is a film director.

Her films often resemble reportage - simple reflection without any subjectivism or adornment. The film lasts 60 minutes, but it is more a documentary film than a journalist's report.

"Bakhmaro" can easily be called a film, as the mood is created based on the methods that are the prerogative of cinema.

The first frame and a sound - the remote barking of a dog - breaks the silence. This immediately forms a mood that continues throughout the entire film. The silence that lasts for 60 minutes is introduced by the director in the very first frame. It is not a literal silence, as it is often penetrated by noise, but a deep, powerful silence that has penetrated into the walls, rooms, bones and mind. The silence is so powerful that even the barking of the dog sounds remote and weak.

As soon as the barking is heard, one guesses that the film will be sad.

It is assumed that the film is about ordinary social themes, which are so popular nowadays... At first sight, this assumption seems to be true, as we watch a building with broken windows and moss-covered walls.

However, this film is different. While for 60 minutes it reflects sadness and joy alike, the film is neither sad nor joyful.

The film maintains balance. This is due to the director's inner freedom and courage. Despite the sadness of the subject line and the form, the director was not worried that her film might be boring. Therefore, she did not care about making the film more colored. As a result, there is a natural, interesting and deep film about silence and sadness - this is a great achievement of the director.

Silence and motionlessness are the main themes of the film as well as the peculiarity of its form.

Salome Jashi tells about a building in Bakhmaro, chiefly occupied by a restaurant. Other parts of the building serve as shops, residential apartments, a music school, institutions of indeterminate function and... emptiness.

The building is half-destroyed. The wind blows from the windows and fills the frames of the films with sharp coldness. Against this background, the colors of the restaurant walls and tables decorated with napkins look quite grotesque.

The restaurant seems to be dead, as does the entire building. The pulse and rhythm of life are reduced to a minimum here. Whatever moves is filled with sadness and tiredness...

People are tired of the immobility they live in. It may seem tragic, but there are no signs of tragedy in the film. Everything looks sad but not tragic. The environment is in need of "hot emotions", acute feelings and vivid colors. However, the scenes are so cold and empty that vivid colors are impossible...

The people inhabiting this emptiness adjust to their environment. Even if they sit in front of the TV watching the vivid colors and listening to the sounds, even if they watch a humorous program, they don't laugh.

In contrast, the room filled with musical instruments is full of pathos. Here, a teacher gives a music lesson to a little girl. However, the pathos necessary for performing a heroic piece of music cannot defeat the silence that has "swallowed" the environment. Hence, the music is weak and remote, like the barking of the dog in the beginning of the film.

Against the background of the pervasive motionlessness, the political posters on the walls seem grotesque. They say: "It is time for change!" or "There is still much to be done!" (slogans of Georgia's ruling party).

Having seen the environment of the film, we know that changes and actions are the domain of fantasy.

The political mottos on the walls reflect the dreams of people who await a knight that will arrive mounted not on a white horse but on changes.

The knight appears with his entourage, and it seems a match has been lit in the dark building, but he leaves and the weak fire is extinguished by a cold wind.

The wind rustles the pieces of political posters on the walls.

There are many stories in the film, but it seems nothing has happened for 60 minutes. This nothing is interesting for the viewer, there is only pain for the owner and the staff of the restaurant...

People suffer from this nothingness. However, at the end of the film the tourist season starts in Bakhmaro - hope appears, the dust and spider webs are removed. Yet, all hope is in vain, as there are no clients.

However, it is not clients that break the silence. The main theme is the people, their lives that resemble the editing of the film, static camera and silence.

The film resembles the people it reflects. It seems the aim of the director was to focus on the environment – cold, silent, immobile. The environment is precisely reflected and even made tangible in the film.

If you have ever experienced being in a similar building, you will be amazed at the precision of Salome Jashi's film. If not, having watched the film, you will feel that you are familiar with the silence that is so pervasive in the interiors of similar buildings. **fp**

Photo: Anka Gujabidze

Reality or Fantasy of Isolated Consciousness?

>> Irina Demetradze

The prototype for Rene – the main character of Aleko Tsabadze's film "Rene Goes to Hollywood"- is probably the surrealistic painter Rene Magritte. Surrealism is the main stylistic feature of the film. There is no single subject line or time. The film shifts from one time to another. So we cannot avoid specific terms and the concept of ontology. The main layer of the film is an ontological, existential experience.

We have already mentioned surrealism. Another definition would also be appropriate – superrealism. It is a significant feature of the film. However, surrealism is avant-garde, whereas Tsabadze's film is of a post-modern structure. I mean above all the use of quotations, which, personally for me, is the least attractive feature of the film. It is monosemantic and prevents me, as a spectator, from perceiving images and events based on my personal emotional memory.

In my opinion, one of the main elements of the film is time. Is there objective time in the film? The concrete attributes of modern times are assimilated into historical time. The subjective time of the main character is mixed with historical memory.

There is another important dimension – the film Rene is shooting. Yes, Rene is a film director, even though it is with a famous painter that he shares his name. The mention of Hollywood in the title is one more phantom in the film's space. This film is probably Aleko Tsabadze's "8/1/2" or "Hour of the Wolf". Yet, it seems linear and devoid of originality. I like the way in which Nika Tavadze's character perceives reality by means of a camera. This is viewed as "maniacal" emotion, in an unusual sense of the word.

The subject line is interesting with regard to Ucha (V. Barbakadze) and his brother (Z. Begalishvili). It is a way to introduce the issue of dualization, a kind of cultural code. The narrative transfers to the layer of psychoanalysis. The director illustrates obsession and neurosis. It is possible that Zura Begalishvili's character is a Rene's second self. Tsabadze does not allow any rational interpretation. In fact, uncertainty and doubt facilitate cognition and, probably, this is the main idea of the film.

Rene is in the focus of his own video camera. I like this device especially. Director of photography Mindia Esadze manages to represent the pictures of various worlds through realistic devices. There are neither barriers nor conventions. There is almost no atmosphere in contemporary Georgian films. Mindia Esadze's and Aleko Tsabadze's work is an exception in this regard. The image created by Mindia Esadze is not "dead".

The film contains several quotations from other works. One is from "A Catcher in the Rye". Like Salinger, Tsabadze offers a synthesis of the absurd and the trivial. In the beginning of the film, Nika Tavadze's character finds himself in a "yahoo settlement" and meets a man who spits at him. Later Rene kills the man. A completely trivial story. However, there is one more layer to it - historical allusion or memory.

Rene's surname is Dadiani, i.e. he is a Georgian prince. His ancestors were personally acquainted with the great Georgian writer and statesman Ilia Chavchavadze and a photo proves this. The photo becomes "alive", and so does history. In the past, Rene Dadiani Sr was also offended by a peasant and killed him. This is the main concept of the film – a vicious circle and a sense of inevitability. The murder of Ilia Chavchavadze is a benchmark, the beginning and the end of Georgian history. Maybe it is also a cliché...

I mentioned above that I found the direct allusions in the film to be less than interesting. Some quotations, however, adequately reflect historical memory - my favorite recent film, "The White Ribbon" (M. Haneke) – and individual memory - "Last Year at Merienbad" by Alain Resnais and Robbe-Grillet. This is European cultural tradition, whereas Georgian culture is devoid of reflection and sensualism. I would say, Georgian culture is less sensitive to similar themes. That's why we should appreciate the attempt by Aleko Tsabadze and the producers involved in this project (L. Korinteli, G. Rcheulishvili, S. Bazghadze, A. Gelovani).

From my student years I remember the importance of a refrain in a film. It may be a nuance, a detail, something of secondary importance, but something that creates the mood and the atmosphere that subconsciously involves the spectator into the film space. For me, this refrain in the film is the musician in the tent whom Rene observes from his window.

It is not that I am nostalgic for lumpens or that I see the old non-conformist Tsabadze. I do not consider non-conformism and lumpenization to be a merit of film. This is the language of cinema, and Tsabadze is exceptional in forming his unique language of cinema. In this film I saw the manner of the author of "The Night Dance". I may be subjective, but I dislike "social cinema".

Like Mindia Esadze's camera work, Nika Tavadze's acting is exceptional, in fact the best in recent Georgian film history. The actor does not bring theatrical clichés or falsehoods to the screen. He is neither a bad guy nor an individual alienated from reality. Aristocratism, minimalism, plasticity – the psycho-physical picture of the role. No mannerism and only inner expression.

One episode shows Nika Tavadze's character at the cemetery together with his sister (Tina Aleksishvili). This duet of actors is both externally and emotionally very organic. One can see aristocratism. Various factors determine the mechanism of identification, including the social factor. For some people these images are unacceptable due to their aristocratism and exceptional appearance...

The tombstone shows Rene's childhood photo. Is it the eccentric nature of the character or is it a sign of something else? Maybe this is an introduction of the theme of death, which is very important in the existential layer. The reconstruction of the main character's life, his reflection, are sealed by the sign of death. To quote Pasolini, "Death is the final sense of life". **fp**

Photo: Niko Krepsi

Days of Eclipse: Silent Protest against the August War and Anemic Characters in Tamar Shavgulidze's Film

>> Davit Bukhrikidze

When Tamar Shavgulidze's first feature film, "Born in Georgia", was screened, the pain of the August 2008 War with Russia had been forgotten and withdrawn from the consciousness of the spectators. The emotions aroused by this film revived the dramatic reality, forgotten by youngsters charmed by illuminated concerts and nightclub entertainment. However, the strange behavior of the four characters of the film, their reticence and anemic nature is conditioned by the war that destroys all their dreams.

The director united the characters according to a single simple but comprehensible geographical parameter: they were born in Georgia... One of the latest projects of the Sanguko film studio, Tamar Shavgulidze's refined 80-minute work deserves the label "art-house". The film reminds us that Georgian films are not only about feasting, parodying eating and drinking and sex among seasonal tourists. The script of the film won the competition of Georgian National Film Center in 2010 and received corresponding finances.

The film includes painful television documentary scenes of the bombing of Gori by Russian planes. Watching these scenes, the audience forgets about popcorn and "fast-food" cinema. The audience of the post-war country cannot be cheered up by entertaining films or burying their heads in the sand in the face of the harsh reality of the pain suffered.

The war in August 2008 seems to disappear from the film after the first few minutes. However, it is an invisible barometer to measure the spiritual state of the main characters. They are each about 30 years old. Their childhood memories are the civil war in Tbilisi (1991-92) and the war in Abkhazia (1992-93). Their later memories include the five-day war between Georgia and Russia in 2008. This is their most painful adult trauma.

These reticent young Georgians purposefully abstain from mentioning the word "motherland", and the dramatism in their faces and movements is strictly reserved. The main characters of the film are: the strange and internally conflicted Tamri (Tamar Bziava), her husband, unemployed and romantic Nika (Vaniko Tarkhnishvili), lecturer in foreign languages, lonely and internally devastated Tina (Nutsa Kukhianidze) and the responsible and punctual Giorgi (Giorgi Giorganashvili), who arrived from the USA to Georgia in the very first days of the war.

"I wish to live in a country where people are happy to go out and walk in the streets", says Nika in one of the episodes. This phrase is a kind of refrain. All four characters wish to live in a better environment, but they are unable to change the existing reality. The war reveals not only their psychological anemia and physical weakness, it also undermines their future and leads them to deadlock. Despite the crisis, the characters try to maintain friendly relations. The cliches of "motherland" and "patriotism" turn into tragedy in the end, as Nika is blown up by a mine while doing repair works on a road.

Apart from episodic roles, only the four characters appear on the screen. The film is neither dynamic nor action-packed. Almost nothing happens until the end. One simply observes the depressing routine of the youngsters affected by war. However, all this is so obvious and realistic that the audience is not bored. Despite the recent war, the film is devoid of pompousness and patriotic rhetoric. One sees war scenes only in the beginning, but the acuteness of the war is felt throughout the film. Finally, Nika falls victim to the "remnant" of the war.

The director never mentions the word "occupiers" and abstains from drawing a grotesque picture of the Russian forces (like Georgian TV channels do). The focus is made on those who are "born in Georgia", their devastated inner world and silent protest, which makes the film more dramatic, precise and reserved. However, a naïve "victim" has its naïve feeling of "protest". The occupation troops deployed several kilometers away remind us that those who are "born in Georgia" find it difficult to assess things in a rational way and blame others for their failures.

Alongside its numerous merits, the film has certain shortcomings: the dialogue in certain episodes is deficient (the script was written by the director Tamar Shavgulidze); to fill the gap, "meaningful" pauses are artificially used, and all four characters smoke a lot. And yet, the mood in the film is precise and meaningful, the tone is precise and melancholic. The visual culture is at a high level and certain episodes may remind Alain Resnais' famous film "Muriel" with its purposeful dramaturgical "emptiness", silent tension and depressive tone.

The static "full" camera of the director of photography, Giorgi Shvelidze, does not need any tricks or special effects. The music by Gio Tsintsadze is, as usual, high-class, although used excessively. The work of art director Salome Skhirtladze is professional and refined. The simple and non-pretentious editing does not cause irritation. One of the merits of the director is the feel for the musical rhythm and composition of narration.

Although "Born in Georgia" had a complicated political "background" (the Russian reaction can be easily predicted), unlike "Five days of War", the propaganda film by Renny Harlin, it is highly probable that this movie will be screened at some art-house festival. **fp**

Photo: Nata Sopromadze

Documentary Cinema as an Art of Observation
/Review of Alexander Kviria's Film "Gorelovka, a Community on the Edge of Extinction"/

>> Keta Kirtava

Gorelovka is a village in southern Georgia inhabited by Dukhobors, a schismatic Orthodox Christian sect exiled from Russia in the 1940s. Dukhobors are considered by some as the first "Orthodox Protestants". Due to their different religion they were declared heretics and exiled to various places, including Georgia.

The Dukhobors managed to retain their ethnic and religious identity even in the Soviet period. Currently there is a small community of Dukhobors in Georgia, but it is nearly extinct, as, due to social, economic and personal reasons, they are abandoning their lands and their community is falling apart.

The word "Dukhobor" means "Spirit Wrestler". Their way of life is extremely peaceful. The Dukhobors are pacifists and consider spiritual struggle to be the only acceptable kind of fighting. Peaceful in action and struggling spiritually - an interesting image.... If one struggles spiritually and seeks truth, he finds it ... And when one finds the truth, he gains inner peace.

Alexander Kviria's film "Gorelovka, a Community on the Edge of Extinction" tells about people who are internally peaceful and spiritually struggling. The film is a peaceful and calm description of the life of Dukhobors. The audience is able to calmly observe their attitude to life and reality.... Strange as it may seem, the spiritual fighters believe that earthly life is temporary and the space given to people on the earth should be used for spiritual struggle.

However, they have a love for life which seems to be a physical reflection of spiritual perfection. Their homes, clothes and rituals, their attitude to work, closeness to nature – all this is a fruit of their faith, which unites love for life and spiritual preparation (struggle). It is a search for God in their daily routine.

Why does a human being take care of his earthly life? Why does one care to fasten their headscarf properly (which is a tradition), and wear extremely clean clothes when going to mow grass? All this is done not to be seen by others, but for one's own sake. They respect their own selves and consider themselves part of God.

There is different time and space in Gorelovka, inhabited by different people who follow time and lose track of the beginning as a result. ... They forget the initial language – the language of nature. As one observes their speech and behavior, one sees the beginning which is still visible, because they are untouched by civilization.

The religious practices of the Dukhobors are interesting – their psalms pass from generation to generation orally. Their religion is a kind of folklore. It is subject to human interpretation. It is not a fixed system of norms, but a living organism, unaffected by taboo or the passing of fashions. It is a result of human thinking, inner requirements and culture.

The director's careful and restrained attitude to this reality is fascinating. The film gives rise to numerous questions... In my opinion, such documentaries are far more interesting than films with a concrete message, as they stimulate further thoughts. It is good when the director just shows things... Certainly, the screen reality cannot be completely uninfluenced by the subjective attitude of the author who selects and fixes a concrete reality. But it is good when there is space for the spectator's emotional attitude. When watching such films, there is a special feeling of freedom.

The film includes several interviews... Strangely enough, in this closed and isolated community, each character has a different opinion, a rather healthy opinion concerning migration and its reasons. This is freedom of opinion, based on love and sincerity. Hence, the viewer is unable to come to one concrete conclusion. I, as the viewer, have my own version with regard to this reality.

The disintegration of the small community has become part of a larger irreversible process. This migration is an interesting example of civilization penetrating into the mentality of a concrete group. To be more precise, civilization attracts this group, the center attracts the periphery. In this case the image of civilization is not a tractor (which is usual for the films of the Soviet period), but an idea of a mythical city where life is much better. In the mythical city all ideas are united into one global idea.

Hence, the phenomenon of the Dukhobor is perishing. The global idea should help people find something in common, but the situation is just the contrary - people become alienated from one another. It would probably be better if people united not around one global idea but retained their national identity, viewpoints and faith without being afraid of these differences. This would mean they had found something in common. When the feeling of unity disappears, it gives birth to a special kind of sadness. fp

The National Peculiarities of "Road Movies" Mindia Esadze's Characters beyond a Well-Preserved "Alfa-Romeo" and "Bayern"

>> Davit Bukhrikidze

The interest of film critics toward young filmmakers is quite natural. Some wish to discover talent, others await with curiosity the emergence of somebody new and original to commit an aesthetic "act of heroism". The majority, however, make a simple list of questions such as: how did the director manage to charm the sponsors? Is the script topical? Will the film achieve success at some international film festival?

Mindia Esadze's feature documentary film "Not White – Black" made it to several festivals easily and was even awarded (e.g. at the international festival of documentary films in Copenhagen). At the end of August, alongside Nana Janelidze's and Keti Machavariani's films, Esadze's film was successfully screened at the annual film festival in Montreal.

It would be wrong to refer to Mindia Esadze as "debutant". He has worked as director of photography on several impressive films, e.g. Zaza Kolelishvili's "War and Wedding" and Aleko Tsabadze's "Rene Goes to Hollywood". Now he has made an attempt to make a documentary "road movie".

"Not White – Black" is an impressive and successful debut. The director also fulfills the function of director of photography. This is a wonderful way to refine the so-called "reportage look".

Taking into account that for many Georgian men it is usual to import cars from Germany and sell them at the Georgian market, the selection of the reportage format and the "road movie" genre is justified. The nearly hour-long film bears the characteristic features of a road movie. Unfortunately, the film was screened only a couple of times at the Cinema.

The film is the story of two young Georgian men who travel to Munich to bring back a black BMW used by a woman but end up bringing back a cheap silver, half-destroyed Alfa-Romeo which they are unable to sell. One of the youngsters (played by Davit Javakhia) is almost a professional trader of used cars and is well aware of the dangers awaiting car-traders on their long journey. The other one (performed by Mamuka Esadze with naive and ironic ingenuousness) is totally inexperienced and unaware of possible difficulties.

The director succeeded in creating precise psychological portraits of two different characters: for a professional car-dealer Europe means obligatory stops, border posts and two thousand kilometers on the road (Germany – Greece-Italy-Turkey-Georgia). He knows he has to traverse this road quickly, as the European visa which he has obtained with great difficulty has only a few days left on it. Since he has to cover a long distance in five days, he does not even think of seeing any historical places or museums.

Mamuka Esadze's character is a professional painter. He also wants to watch the Bayern-Nurenburg football match in Munich, but the ticket is too expensive. He observes shop windows and museums, is eager to see the town hall in Munich, buy a Venetian mask and taste a Turkish doner kebab. However, he lacks both time and money. The director of the film, who is also a director of photography, notices how brave the young trader becomes in Turkey after being scared and silent in Europe.

Davit Javakhia's character has traveled in Europe for many years, and yet he has not visited Venice. He is engrossed in his trade and totally indifferent to historical buildings, the Bayern match, the Venetian landscapes and boring sex-shops.

Despite funny episodes and almost anecdotal dialogues, the adventure of a Georgian painter buying a white Alfa-Romeo is full of sadness. This is not only due to the financial crisis forcing him to start a risky business.

The inexperience, infantilism and high expectations of the character inspire empathy. His business ends in failure – the silver Alfa-Romeo is not suitable for the Georgian market. The traders have nothing to do but sell it for parts. They will recover the expenditures by means of bringing a black BMW, used by a woman. The poor Alfa-Romeo has traveled throughout Europe to be sold for parts at a flea market...

The infantilism of the main character is generalized in the end and serves as a warning addressed to society: don't seek success relying only on your dreams and God's help! "Not White - Black" is a joint production of the Gemini production company and Duta Productions. The script of the film won a competition held by the Georgian National Film Center and the film was shot with the Film Center's co-financing.

Mindia Esadze's films prove that documentary cinema needs to arouse the interest of directors, producers, private companies and the National Film Center. This interest is even more crucial for a documentary than financing. The most important, of course, is a good and well-structured script. According to the producer of the film, Tiko Kajrishvili, "In Europe documentary films are mainly financed by TV stations, whereas in Georgia they are viewed as reportage. Unlike in Europe, in Georgia documentary films are not screened in movie theaters, which is detrimental for the documentary genre. No other genre can be used to tell the West about us in a better way". **fp**

Red and White
Nana Janelidze's Documentary on the Kakhi Kavsadze Saga

>> Davit Bukhrikidze

Nana Janelidze's one-hour feature-documentary film about one of the most popular Georgian actors, Kakhi Kavsadze is most interesting at a certain distance. The title of the film – "Will There be a Theatre up There?!" is a reference to the Soviet epoch's destroyed biographies and lives full of horror. It is no coincidence that the director began to shoot the film in a railroad car repair plant bearing the name of Stalin and continued shooting on the stage and in the wings of Tbilisi's Rustaveli Theater.

The main character of the film is famous actor Kakhi Kavsadze - whose artistic narrative tells about the repressions his family faced from the Soviet regime - is as exciting as seeing people and objects reflected in a vague mirror. They are devoid of contours, but this increases the intensity of perception and "artistic merit". Kavsadze's character seems to exist simultaneously in real and imaginary worlds.

The film encompasses the biography of the actor and his entire generation, tragic or sad, funny or absurd stories of the Soviet epoch. The elements characteristic of documentary narration co-exist with real creative characters. The mixture of the unusual environment of the factory and shooting location, which seems a purposeful "mess" of the languages of theater and cinema, is justified by the feature-documentary form.

The uniqueness of the film and the mixture of genres is thanks to its experienced director of photography, Giorgi Berlidze, with whom the director cooperated several times before. Among these, mention should be made of the popular but somewhat pretentious "Lullaby" and last year's feature-documentary "The Knights of Chant".

Thanks to Zura Mikeladze, the scenography and design of the film imply more theatrical arbitrariness than the strictness which is characteristic of documentary films. The composer is Misha Mdinaradze, costumes designer is Keti Palavandishvili. Alongside Kavsadze, Nino Kuratashvili, Irakli Kakauridze, Niko Kakauridze and act in the film.

As Nana Janelidze said in a recent interview, "The shooting lasted for nearly two weeks. Kakhi was so open and told so many interesting stories about his family and their painful past that I felt embarrassed to ask questions."

Kakhi Kavsadze's vast artistic monologues familiarize us with the painful history of his family. Sandro Kavsadze - his grandfather, a famous musician, specialist in choir singing and folklore; Data Kavsadze – his father, whom little Kakhi saw only several times; his mother, who taught him singing, his younger brother, who supported Kakhi in hard times. The actor also reads a letter he wrote at the age of seven asking Stalin to tell him where his father is. This episode is a mixture of childhood naivety and artistic emotion.

He also reads a letter Stalin wrote to his grandfather: "Dear Sandro! I learnt by chance from Egnatashvili that you are in hospital. They say you will get well soon. Please write if you need any help. I will gladly assist you. May you live long! Yours, Soso, 1937." Another impressive episode shows Kakhi Kavsadze taking an old photograph from his pocket. This is a photo of little Kakhi, his mother and brother, taken during World War II.

Some stories narrated in the film seem mystical. For instance, the story of Kakhi's father forming a folk music choir consisting of Georgian, Russian, Jewish and Armenian prisoners of war. The prisoners' camp was constantly filled with Georgian songs, and this saved the singers from execution.

After World War II the prisoners had a chance to emigrate to the USA, but Data Kavsadze decided to return to Georgia. However, he was arrested on the way to Tbilisi and exiled to Siberia, where he died. His widow brought up two children alone (by the way, her part is well performed in the film by Nino Kuratashvili)... A few hours before her death, in agony, she kept repeating her husband's name, Data, with whom she had lived for only seven years. The rest of her life was difficult because her husband had been branded an enemy of the people.

Incidentally, Stalin's pipe is kept in the archive of Kavsadze's family. The pipe seems to have retained the smell of tobacco smoked by Stalin. Kavsadze's grandfather studied with Stalin at the theological seminary in Tbilisi. When the head of the greatest empire asked him what present he would like to have, Sandro Kavsadze answered: "I would like to have your pipe as a present and nothing else".

The title of the film is a question asked by a famous Georgian actor Akaki Vasadze on his deathbed: "I wonder if there's a theater there".

The dramatic monologues of Kakhi Kavsadze, his humour and optimism (in which Nana Janelidze's dramatic chronicle abounds) lead one to conclude that "there is a theater there". Watching the film, we even believe in the metaphor of the road from the railroad car repair plant to the Rustaveli Theater. Life is a constant game between reality and imagination, to quote Bergman's "Light and Shade". **fp**

Photo: Niko Krepsi

"Susa" - Sensitive Domain of Social Cinema

>> Davit Bukhrikidze

"Susa", a film with a short and easy-to-remember title created by young director Rusudan Pirveli, has been quite lucky. Support of Hubert Balls Foundation and Rotterdam International Festival, several important screenings in a special program of the 60th film festival in Berlin in 2010; later, success in South Korea, where the film was awarded a special prize...

Yet the most important success was achieved at the 11th international film festival in Tbilisi: Rusudan Pirveli was awarded the Grand Prix Gold Prometheus for the film. Any director would be proud of such an achievement.

Afterwards, festivals followed one another like frames in commercials. The film "Susa" encompasses everything: rehabilitation of the forgotten social cinema in Georgian films, an attempt to restore the black-and-white reality of Tbilisi in the 1990s, the boundless misery of that reality, the remaining Soviet route taxis, depressing stations and suburbs, corrupt and dangerous policemen, fatherless children who run about like hungry wolves instead of studying...

Susa, a boy of 10-12 (performed by Avtandil Tetradze), collects bottles of vodka to help his reticent and miserable mother (Ekaterine Kobakhidze). Waiting for the return of his missing father (Giorgi Gogishvili), Susa traverses the same sad route every day: from Avchala to the bus station and shops, selling bottles of counterfeit vodka to shops, pubs and station cafes.

Other characters are a natural part of the film: teenagers who rob Susa of the money he gets from selling bottles; a policeman who, for unknown reasons, is Susa's enemy; the director of a factory that produces counterfeit vodka (Levan Lortkipanidze plays this role believably and with irony). On the other hand, Susa has a devoted friend called "Dwarf" (Paata Khvedelidze), who is older and more experienced in struggling against the police and surviving.

Hope and expectation fill the little boy with a certain fortitude. He grows personally when reality shatters his childish illusions. Susa has a peculiar feature – he observes his environment carefully and collects colored glass fragments in order to make a kaleidoscope. However, he spends most of his time at the counterfeit vodka distillery and sells its product to shady cafes and stores. From time to time he visits his mother.

The somber atmosphere in Giorgi Chalauri's script contains psychologically significant and socially precise details, which must have been of great help for the director. However, the subjective narration and excessive sentiments overshadow these details. The vision of director of photography Mirian Shengelia is sharp and existential, although not rich in nuance.

Rusudan Pirveli's film reminds the audience of Georgia's recent past with its dirty streets and dilapidated stations, and dubious markets and institutions. In my opinion, the director was attracted by the natural and long rhythm of teenagers and streets, rendering the dramaturgical line of the mother and the problem of missing father colorless. The father, who has abandoned the family under the pretext of finding a job elsewhere, is not a long-anticipated savior for Susa. His father's absence is a source of gradually building dull pain. Susa lives according to his own rhythm and is not very emotional about his mother.

The small dilapidated house in a suburb called Avchala, where Susa lives with his mother, also reminds us of the hardships of the 1990s. However, poverty is also common in today's suburbs and forms a contrast to the shining lights, freshly-painted houses and asphalted roads in the center of the city. Thus, Susa is not only a portrait of the past – i.e. the Shevardnadze period.

The film also reflects the hardships still common in this country, which has been so successful in recent years at combating corruption... Well, this is a matter of social and even political aesthetics.

Paradoxically enough, "Susa" was influenced by Giorgi Ovashvili's "The Other Bank", the main character of which is also a poor boy, aged ten. He is ready to overcome all barriers in search of his home in the occupied zone. Finally he succeeds in finding his home. Susa is looking neither for his home nor his parents. He has his little "aims" and struggles for self-preservation; he seems to have adjusted to his environment and is punished both socially (as he has to live in a hopeless atmosphere) and psychologically (his parents are not interested in his future)...

When we witness his futile protest at the end, in which he attacks the director of the vodka distillery, we feel that he is no longer a child - he has grown up and become militant.

Pirveli's 80-minute film does not claim to describe either teenage problems or the social anemia of the country, although the film paints a picture of Georgia in the 1990s – the environment in which the young generation sees nothing but hopelessness and lack of prospects. Life plods along on its own - with outdated Soviet route taxis, unhappy, fatherless and aggressive teenagers, silent mothers working for peanuts, greedy counterfeiters of vodka, corrupt police, etc.

This detailed description of the social environment paints an accurate picture of the Shevardnadze era. However, to tell the truth, the director is engrossed in routine details and her sympathy towards the main character is excessive. This damages the dramaturgy of the film and the dynamism of narration.

Thus, "Susa" is not only a sensitive domain of social cinema but also a subjective and sensitive portrait of the new generation. **fp**

Not Subject to Human Conventionality

"Conspiracy" of Georgian director-intellectuals - this is how critics evaluated the first full-length films by Dmitri Mamulia ("The Other Sky") and Bakur Bakuradze ("Shultes"). Novel conceptual structure, philosophical sub-text and minimalism – these are the peculiarities of their styles. However, there is great difference between them...

"Direct cinema", declaration and recitative are unacceptable for Dmitri Mamulia. In this case one misses the essence and captures only an untrue event or sign. Mamulia's film vocabulary focuses on elusive reality and substance, and not a copy...

Below we present Irina Demetradze's interview with Dmitri Mamulia.

fp Dima, you are well-known in Georgia. Your film "The Other Sky" was awarded the Grand Prix in Batumi. It was also screened at Tbilisi International Film Festival. You live and work in Russia. In an interview you said that your film is not about a specific city - Moscow - but the universe in general. Is there any link between the film and your historical motherland? And, generally, how important is the national feature in your films? Does the world represented by your films reflect cultural identity, genetic links with national culture and history?

We are never aware of what we are influenced by. It is like a magnetic storm that affects our blood pressure and circulation. This "circulation of blood" is also influenced by the "images" we have seen and objects we have touched. We are often unaware of this influence and think we do not depend on it. However, it is in our veins and eyes, so we perceive the universe with an outlook influenced by the above-mentioned. The city where I was born, its streets and faces have certainly influenced me. History also has an influence, as it is a gallery of images, a set of faces and masks, and we are always dependent on it. We depend on separate figures, contours that are revealed everywhere and in everything. The figurative side is very vivid in Georgian culture. When I mention "figure" I mean that universal features are revealed in signs and hieroglyphs that reflect something and are not silent. They are symbols like Pierrot, Harlequin, Colombina... There are numerous figures and hieroglyphs in Georgian culture, both vivid and covert. Everyone who has been in touch with these figures is influenced by them.

fp Let us return to the matter of perception of the universe. Since you make conceptual films, you reject sociological attitudes and all kinds of specifics. Probably you attempt to introduce a transcendental dimension. You do not seek rational sense in the image. Like with Bresson and Ozu, sense is replaced by a move to a different space.

An artistic image is created like in alchemy – one takes a vessel, pours mercury or sulphur into it, and waits. These substances react and start to change. They have a soul, a heart and even love. One has to identify the two substances and determine their quantity. One never knows in advance what will happen - he just waits and watches. If one manages to identify the substances correctly, their image will merge with the human essence. God save us from attempting to see and grasp this essence. Whatever we are able to understand is worthless.

There is a Zen-Buddhist saying: "I entered Buddha's palace sitting backwards on an ox". One can penetrate into Buddha's palace only back to front. If you enter straightforward, it is your palace and not Buddha's. In this palace, houses are built, careers are made, worthless positions are occupied in the delusive hierarchy. One has to see this picture of a figure sitting backwards on an ox; only in this case does everything become clear.

fp What is valuable for you in Georgian cinema? Do you watch contemporary Georgian films? Do you plan to shoot films in Georgia? You are often compared to Bakur Bakuradze. You are intellectual directors of contemporary Russian cinema. However, your styles differ.

This is again a question of influence. We are influenced by everything that affects us emotionally. Only in this way do events turn into experience. I can probably name more than 10 films that have influenced me greatly. Besides, I studied in Tbilisi. My teacher was Sasha Rekhviashvili. Later I used to watch his marvelous films and they never ceased to amaze me. In Moscow I was taught by Irakli Kvirikadze.

I have seen only two contemporary Georgian films - those of Levan Koghuashvili and Irakli Paniashvili. I like them. As for plans, so far shooting in Georgia is just a dream. I will be happy if it comes true. I hate the word "intellectual", I think its meaning is depreciated. Words lose their power and turn sour like milk.

fp It is difficult to classify your film under any of the directions in modern cinema. There is a kind of post-socialist syndrome in the films of Eastern Europe, e.g. the new wave of the Romanian cinema, films by Loznitsa and Bela Tarr. I mean the image of the universe represented by these directors – the crisis of mentality, disappearance of the pillar of support, the fear of change and new reality. The post-socialist syndrome is connected with the actualization of historical memory. For the new generation, all the key events of the 20th century are associated with new myths and not the ones created by social realism or pseudo-art. Suffice it to remember Loznitsa's films ("Blockade", "My Joy"). It would be interesting to know your opinion with regard to the above-mentioned.

Yes, this is so. Besides, all the above-mentioned directors speak a certain language. I mean the language of cinema. This is very important. It is necessary to be filled with the spirit of your "own" time. But this does not mean substitution of "old" heroes with "new" ones or substitution of elevated language with argot. All this is frequent in contemporary literature, theater and cinema. This is ostensible innovation. "The spirit of time" is not present either in contemporary famous faces or their argot. It nests in forms and contours and develops into a language and style that can "mirror" reality and become a picture of the universe.

fp The messianism, so characteristic of Russian culture and cinema, is not your feature. The character of your film does not seek answers to the global questions. Moreover, he does not think at all. You do not attempt to put questions or supertasks to him. The character just exists. There is internal development. However this is not what you call positive values: career, success, family, money etc. This is external existence. You are interested in the internal existence – the dynamics that cannot be converted into material objects. You address intuitive and not intellectual cognition. Don't you think the contemporary audience really appeals to intuition? For them, it is easier to juggle with "ready-made" truths and ideas.

In general, films are not made for the spectators, much as books are not written for the readers. The same with love – love is not conditioned by certain institutions like marriage and family. On the contrary, paradoxically enough, love opposes these institutions. A short while ago I read the notes made by Goron, head of the Paris Investigation Police in the last century. He discusses crime and its causes. In one precise sentence he says we still fight for our daily bread, just as our ancestors who lived in forests fought for a piece of meat. Only love, like death, is not subject to human conventionality. "Not subject to human conventionality" is a very precise utterance. Whatever is conventional is abominable. Only love and death are beyond conventionality, and this is the theme of art. What you have said about converting into materially tangible objects is also precise. The head of the Investigation Police was right – only love and death are inconvertible.

fp What do you dislike in your film?

It is difficult to speak about the film. I dislike many things. Whatever I have completed, I hate. I am attracted only by what is elusive and impossible to seize, what has occurred independently from my will. I like the look of Mitra at the end of the film. He looks as if I - as the author - do not exist. I would not have imagined that such a look could be possible. This look predominates over everything I could have known or said. This look predominates over me too. I don't know it; it is alien to me and even frightens me. When I see this look and watch stately Khabib standing at the white door of the sanatorium, lowering his eyes, it seems I have grasped something important in the film. Maybe it happened by itself, without me trying. Life has penetrated into these eyes and this stateliness with a strange force and inspired the characters with some magic power.

fp We know the philosopher and original director Dmitri Mamulia. Intellectual snobbism is not your feature. You are not a man of the front cover. Where do you feel most comfortable? There have probably been moments of sadness and negative experiences in your life, and this has influenced your attitude to people and environment.

It is hard to speak about such experience. All kinds of experiences, including negative ones, open the door into some mysterious room. Thank God it exists.

As for the first part of your question, unfortunately, today it is almost impossible to approach these figures - poet, philosopher. Being a film director is simpler. In this regard, I remembered one Persian tale. There was a man who suddenly got scared at night that in the morning he would not find himself. So he tied a pumpkin to his foot. He fell asleep in a crowded square. He was big, so people easily noticed him and his pumpkin. People took after him, as they usually do, and hundreds of people tied pumpkins to their feet and slept in the square. Thus, as the man awoke to the crowing of the rooster, he saw a multitude of people with pumpkins tied to their feet. So he was unable to distinguish himself from the crowd.

>> Irina Demetradze

Under a Different Sky

>> Irina Demetradze

"Another land and another sky. They might exist somewhere in a distance..." - Merab Mamardashvili. This is an epigraph to this literary script and, accordingly, the key inspiration of the title and the film. "Another Sky" is a synonym for the other world. The main characters in Dmitri Mamulia's film are a father and son, ethnic Tajiks who arrive in a big city to find their wife/mother. The big city is supposedly Moscow, but some specifics are out of place. There are two parallel mutually impenetrable spaces. "Another" in this case means "alien". The main character is "alien" but not alienated. The farce discussed by the characters is one of the attributes of "Another" reality. The language field is, after all, the space in which man exists, be it communicatively or creatively and spiritually.

Human feelings likely do not fall within this universe. Moreover, the two concepts – humanity and life – are incompatible. There is only mimicry, a social stereotype to which a subject adjusts. For Mamulia, being different is of value. The over-arching task of the director is to ignore conventionality. The characters reject the language spoken by the universe.

The road movie in Mamulia's interpretation is monotonous. The archetypal subject lines (Biblical and cinema allusions) are not developed in a classical way. The very act of sacrifice (only after his son's death does the main character find his wife) does not imply any impersonal act. The author points out that nothing occurs in reality. Any kind of dynamics and genesis is related only to cognition. In a sense, "to find" means to get an indirect viewpoint, i.e. reject the perception conditioned by civilization and culture, the average language norm. The rhythm of the film either forms this new viewpoint, or vice versa.

Elliott wrote that the world will end not with an explosion but with a sigh. There is no explosion in Mamulia's film either, nor any other visible cataclysm. The parallel world simply takes precedence. Absence equals presence. This has conditioned the new philosophy in Mamulia's film. The heroes of the 20th century were characterized by a certain "committed existentialism". Non-conformism and rejection of reality arose from other causes. "Another Sky" almost ignores external existence. Only the inner world of the main characters is universal. This is not an "absurd world"; it is neither unreal nor super-real. This is more quasi-reality.

Is the language of the film subject to rationalization? Not really. These days, rational mostly means committed. The myth, in this case the story of Abraham and Isaac, is not a device that illustrates the life of the main characters. For the author, the death of the son is not a sacrifice. It is an ethical dilemma (as is the case with S. Kierkegaard). This is also conventionality. A son is a symbol of life and the future. But in the parallel world beneath "Another sky", similar motivation is out of place.

The signs of the times, the social backdrop, existence, and the problem of migration are wholly realistic, but this does not make the film an example of so-called "direct cinema". It is impossible to identify oneself with the characters and the environment. Again and again, this is a different sky. Each episode is

made so that ordinary everyday details acquire unearthly images (the director of photography is Alisher Khamidkhojaev). The portraits and glances of the characters are unusual. They frequently look into the camera, but their glance is directed "elsewhere", beyond the camera.

My personal feeling on seeing this big city and the urban space in general is one of emptiness, loneliness, and death. For the author, the city and the journey of the main character is similar to Dante's journey. Death is the only dimension of the film. The beginning and the end of the journey. The cosmic space is replaced by chaos. In my opinion, this is one of the main merits of the film. There are episodes with vivid poetic and metaphoric features, e.g. a group of blind children or the processing of felled trees. Associations with the main theme of the film – inexistence – can be easily found. Still, I prefer other episodes: underground train, closed space, emotional memory that revives the past. However there are dynamics in this space – the train rushes towards infinity.

Unearthly landscapes and interiors are created in a style that joins both beginnings – death and life. The main merit of the film, as well as the main drawback, is its monotony. Lack of subject line, lack of commitment and emotional anesthesia are acceptable for me. Certain moments simply evoke a feeling of artificiality. It is hard to fully exist in the space created by this film.

Mamulia made his first short film "Moscow" together with Bakur Bakuradze. This is not a coincidence – for intellectuals, Moscow is not just a geographical-spatial object, but a synonym for "the centre", the point of mediation in which an individual travels Dante's journey. In "Another Sky", Moscow is a place where the homeless are dispatched. This is one of the most interesting episodes of the film – white bedclothes, white interior, naked bodies...

The names of the two directors are often mentioned together. For both of them ethical or social cliches and interpretations are alien. The starting point is metaphysics. In Bakuradze's films we find Bresson's minimalism (elimination), whereas in Mamulia's films there is a look beyond, absence of emotional involvement, observation, abstraction, escape from life's whirlpool. Film reflection and style are devices of visualization of one's self and consciousness.

Why are their films so different from those of their compatriots? Why is social space the only inspiration for Georgian directors? There is an opinion according to which for Georgians the main thing is the stream of life and not of consciousness. This was said concerning Ioseliani's brilliant trilogy. Since then, many things have changed. In Iosseliani's films, the stream of life has been replaced by mannerism, "self-quotation", and simulacra ("Chantrapas"). They say reflection is not a characteristic feature of Georgians. Maybe we can restore the stream of life, where philosophy is mixed with daily routine and not with social artifacts. Probably, apart from war and the bad guys, there is "Another sky", "another reality", "another dimension"... fp

The show must go on
Interview with director Rusudan Chkonia

Soon Rusudan Chkonia's full length feature film "Keep Smiling" will appear on the screen. The film reflects the stories of 10 women who fight to retain their dignity. FILM PRINT interviewed the young director and tried to find out how a good script is developed, what it means to break the stereotype of a Georgian mother and why should one remain an idealist in a debut film.

fp This is probably the first film with perfect dramaturgy in the past 10 years. We, as dramatists, tried to find certain shortcomings in your film, but we failed... We know you developed the script for a long period. Please tell us about it.

It took seven years to create the film. During this period I often submitted the script to the Georgian National Film Center, but they refused to finance it. During these seven years I won several prizes: the script was named one of the three best scripts at the Berlinale co-production market, I won the prize in Abu Dhabi, in Belgrade I was awarded a prize for the Best Middle East Project, "Paris Cinema" invited me to give lectures on script development in "La femme". I also participated in a prestigious program "Residence du festival" in Cannes, which invites six young directors and enables them to develop their projects. After participating in this program, a director falls within the scope of their interest. This means they expect something important from the young director they have selected.

One spends six months in Paris and is offered a stipend. One meets the directors and producers he wants to meet. The only thing they demand is that you develop the script without thinking about earning your daily bread. The conditions are "hot-house" and one lives like a real bourgeois. Personally for me, these conditions were unfavorable. Here in Georgia everything is a source of inspiration. In Paris everything was so polished that the inspiration faded away. In Georgia life is "alive", if you watch the news, there is so much information... For a social story like mine, the conditions in Paris were unfavorable. However, I met a lot of interesting directors and gained significant experience...

In short, the script had a large resonance, but the hardest thing was to obtain financing in Georgia.

Nobody believed I would ever make this film. I remember the head of the World Cinema Foundation told me at Berlinale: "If, having won so many prizes, you still fail to make the film, everyone will lose faith in you!"

Later, beneficial changes took place at the Georgian National Film Center, and I obtained financing. Nothing compares with the joy I felt on being financed by the Georgian side. While awaiting financing from the Georgian National Film Center, I lost several grants. Therefore, I started shooting with little money. I should mention that I would have been unable to make the film without the assistance of the Ministry of Culture and Monument protection of Georgia. So I would like to say special thanks to the Ministry and personally to [the minister] Nicholas Rurua. Besides, I was lucky to have a French producer. As I waited in vain for financing from various funds, the deadline for the Georgian subsidy came close. The French side took a risk and invested their company money in the project. They said: "We have faith in you and we know you'll do a good job".

fp What was the reason for the initial refusal of the Georgian National Film Center? Was the script in need of further development, which you implemented later?

I think the script was good, but during the shootings I realized that my script was long enough for about ten films. I had shot a lot and needed to cut many parts afterwards. I made changes in the script prior to shootings as well. For example: Inga, a character in my film, had a mother and a mother-in-law. Their relations formed a separate plotline in the film. A day

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

before the shooting the actress who was to perform Inga's mother fell ill. So we made changes in the script and left only the mother-in-law. Therefore, I think it was good to be a director and script-writer... Finally, many subject lines were cut, but this is natural. On the whole, I am satisfied. The film has become more compact and united, so I don't regret anything...

fp How did the idea of the film appear? How did you come to the film and what happened before that?

I was 22 when I made a documentary about the orphanage in Bediani. There I met an interesting woman, a mother of seven children, who could not sustain her family in Tbilisi and moved to the village. Once we were drinking tea and she told me what hardships she had suffered. The funniest thing she told me was that in the 1990s she participated in a beauty contest for mothers of many children. The prize was a large sum of money, and her family was in need. The story was a tragic farce - a real film. My script is based on the theme of the beauty contest. However, no character in my film resembles that woman.

fp In your film you tried to show the stereotype of a Georgian mother by means of 10 different women. How were your characters created and how did you select the actresses?

I wanted each of them to represent diverse social layers. Their motivation to participate in the beauty contest is also diverse. I think I managed this: for Irina the main motivation is the apartment and the children, for Gvantsa - to play the violin in public, for Tamuna - it is to prove to her young lover that she is still beautiful, although no longer young, etc.

It was rather hard to select actresses. Initially I searched for actresses that would resemble the women I had imagined. For instance, according to the script, Gvantsa had to be more naïve than the woman performed by Ia. Later I realized that I would never find the women of my imagination. I like Ia's work, although the character was changed: she became more rebellious and boyish, whereas in the script she was hyper-womanly. In general, I think a director should adjust to actors and take as much as possible from them. An actor should be given freedom, and the right impulse is sure to come. There are two kinds of attitudes: a director knows exactly what he wants from the actor and tries to achieve it, or a director is oriented towards the actor. I belong to the second type.

fp As we watched the film, we remembered Sydney Pollack's "They Shoot Horses, Don't They?"...

I love that film, but I don't think there is any resemblance between Pollack's film and mine. My film is more ironic, although there is irony in Pollack's film too. By the way, I have read that Jane Fonda actively participated in the creation of her character...

fp In your film, the media abuses the human tragedies of the characters: Georgian women, mentality, Abkhazian war, etc. are part of a show used by the media to entertain the public. This is the reason of a conflict among the participants...

In general, the media is like that everywhere. This is neither new nor original. When I watch programs like this, I want the participants to quit the show... One of the characters, Elene, is strong enough to quit, because they abuse her personal tragedy and feelings. However, I did not want to make a strong emphasis on this. That's why Elene returns to the show.

The contest itself is contrary to the idea it promotes... In short, for me, all this resembles a patriot camp [Georgian government program] although represented in a slightly modified form...

fp Georgian men look grotesque against the backdrop of "the female microcosm" you have created...

This happened by itself. However, in my opinion, the film is satirical about women too.

Gia is not a negative character. He has his logic. He is part of a certain mechanism. He has no sentiments about women. He just does his job. The women irritate him. If there is so much morality in them, they should stick to it - this is Gia's opinion. Maybe this is not so vivid in the film, but for me, Gia represents the system, the state.

I am almost positive that the female audience will like the film. I wonder what men's reaction will be.

fp If we unite all the women in the film, whose portrait will be drawn and what will be the main conflict?

In general, the beauty contest is a monster born from the idea of motherhood. It is a total farce on the myth of the Georgian mother.

fp Do you think you have succeeded in breaking the stereotype of a Georgian mother?

At least I tried... However, this was not the main mission. I wanted to make a film about people who struggle to retain their dignity...

fp Does the main character fall victim to this morality?

Gvantsa's ideas are doomed to fail. She is disappointed and her suicide resembles the hara-kiri of the Samurai.

fp Does this hara-kiri awaken the society?

Maybe the ending is a bit idealistic. In real life all the women might have rushed to the stage. But I did not want to make a film about the beastly nature of a human being devoid of a sense of sympathy. I wanted to prove that a person is able to take the right decision and reject immoral things with dignity. I think in my first film I had the right to be a bit idealistic. I believe there is a sense of morality in people...

>> Maka Kukulava, Uta Beria

The Magnificence and Poverty of a Georgian Mother

>> Irina Demetradze

"Keep Smiling" is Rusudan Chkonia's first feature film. I liked the film very much, which will make it diffuclt fo rme to maintain balance and ensure that my subjectivity not hamper my analysis of the film.

Ten women of various difficult backgrounds take part in a beauty contest for mothers of many children. One month remains before the final competition, and in this period the present and the past of these women fall within the focus of Mindia Esadze's (director of photography) camera. In accordance with the principles of classical dramaturgy, the climax in the final scene crushes the false "glamorous" happiness.

The key feature of the characters is their social identity. Inga (performed by Nana Shonia) is a "colorful" Megrelian widow, "an honest woman"; Elene (performed by Oliko Babluani) is a refugee from Abkhazia who lives in a converted hospital with her family; Baia (performed by Shorena Begashvili) is the wife of a member of parliament; her husband (performed by Davit Katsarava) and his mistress are typical Georgian "VIP Aristocracy"; Gvantsa is an "enfant terrible" of Georgian cinema. She is a rebel, and, to my mind, she is the most interesting character in the film, the role brilliantly performed by Ia Sukhitashvili. Her antagonist is the project leader Otar (performed by Gia Roinishvili).

Eventually, this couple is the catalyst of the dramatic collision. Other characters are: an Azerbaijani woman, a 46-year-old frustrated woman, a philanderer Dima (performed by Tornike Bziava), who seems generous, yet remains faithful to his principle of "no-strings-attached sex". This is the micro-society in the interior of the theater. The women "on the brink of a social crisis" gather on the stage.

I mentioned "glamour" in the beginning. However, the film is "anti-glamour". This is social cinema, far from "cinema verite" or Ken Loach style, but close to tragic comedy with kitsch elements. Rusudan Chkonia seems to have chosen to follow "the new wave", and the author's individual style unites genre and psychological structures, at the same time making use of Almodovarian kitsch elements.

One thing can be said for sure: this is not a film about women - there are no traces of feminism in the film. In my opinion, male authors (directors and writers) create better works about women. Psychoanalytical interpretations are out of the question. While demonstrating their naked bodies on the stage, the main characters fall victim to aggressive male glances. Milk leaks from Irina's (performed by Tamar Bukhnikashvili) breast, as her hungry baby screams in the wings.

This has nothing to do with the infantilism of the exalted male spectators. It is simply a cliché cleverly deployed by the author. The entire language of the film is a parody of the existing mental cliché. The authors cleverly use sign images. The film is divided into chapters and "Mother of Georgia" is used as caption – an object of passion in the Georgian liberal mentality.

The participants of the beauty contest dance in dresses that resemble the Georgian Flag. The stage is decorated with Georgian state symbols. The performer of the show (Beka Elbakidze) and his assistant 'little angels" are on the edge between conventionality and kitsch. The show is synonymous with reality. This is also a widespread stereotype.

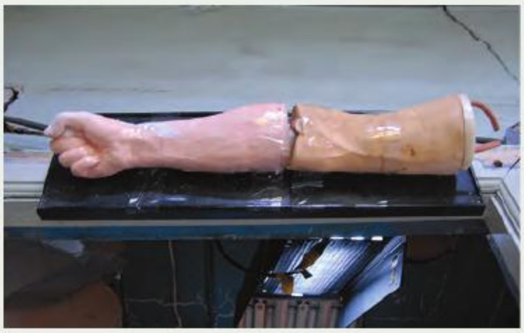
The imitated TV reportage and documentary chronicle are adjusted to the film's langauge in an interesting way. The cooking contest is shot in the refugee camp at Tserovani. The glamorous TV reality is an organic continuation of the show. The story of Elene – the refugee from Abkhazia – is told against the background of refugees fleeing enemy forces via the Chuberi pass. The documentalist Rusudan Chkonia does not shy away from reality even in feature cinema.

Similar themes are the privilege of high-rated shows on Georgian television. This is one more stereotype under the ironic modus of the authors. It is to their credit that, despite genre and stylistic eclecticism, the film is laconic. Human fates are shown with unveiled frankness and emotional acuteness against a background of kitsch.

The main prize – 25,000 USD and a 4-room apartment – is the formula of happiness for the main characters. In accordance with Georgian tradition, mothers compensate for fathers' "weaknesses". The reality modeled by women speaks of neglect of womanly nature rather than the "strength" of the women. This is another stereotype. The author sympathizes with her characters, but does not justify their actions. A woman's happiness has become synonymous with material wellbeing. Moreover, the concept of "mother" excludes femininity and sexuality.

Ia Sukhitashvili's character is an exception. The only motivation for her to participate in the contest is to play the violin publicly. However, life is much more complicated, and any attempt "to lead one's own life" is doomed to failure.

Rusudan Chkonia's successful first feature film "Keep Smiling" is a Georgian-Luxemburgian-French co-production (Nike Studio and Ex Nihilo). The producers of the film are Rusudan Chkonia and Nicolas Blanc. The film was created with the support of the Georgian National Film Center and the Ministry of Culture and Monument protection of Georgia. fp



A.C.N. – ANTE CHRISTUM NATUM /Lat./ The Period Before Christ

>> Alexander Lortkipanidze

"The Clock Worker" is the second film by director, actor, painter and script-writer Giorgi Maskharashvili. The first theatrical screening of the film was held on October 21, 2011. One of the important roles in the film is performed, and performed quite well, by the director himself. Speaking of all the merits and shortcomings of " The Clock Worker " will take us far away, so I will try to explain the structure or, rather, the unstructured nature of the film.

At a glance, the film reminds one of an action thriller, a detective or a mystical drama. This effect is due to the environment rather than the subject line: corpses, awesome surgical instruments, strange inscriptions on the walls, a vague story, etc. However, we should stop here, as, for a careful observer, the mist is dissipated in the very beginning. A person named Gela Nosadze is accused of necrophilia and raping young girls. All the TV channels announce the terrible news, and the criminal maniac is perceived by the society as an analogue of the devil. A young director (performed by Dato Gotsiridze) decides to make a documentary about these events. The shootings exceed TV reality and the main character realizes the truth. It turns out that Gela Nosadze is just a watchmaker who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time and, due to a careless investigation and wrong information provided by the TV, was labeled as a maniac.

The features of his working environment - corpses, surgical instruments, etc. – are part of his experimenting to create an ideal prosthesis. Gela is a self-taught but talented scientist. But this becomes obvious only at the end of the film, when Gela is invited to an international symposium of scientists. However, Gela is paralyzed, as he has been wounded by the father of a murdered girl. There is another tragic story in the film - that of the director's friend (performed by Giorgi Megrelishvili). He cannot find his proper place in Tbilisi and joins the army in Afghanistan. Later, his corpse is brought back. I will say nothing about Gela's girlfriend and his friend, the painter Lado (performed by Giorgi Maskharashvili). They are in the film to represent the positive features of Gela.

As for the dramaturgical structure...

If the film is viewed as a detective story, one feels that the characters investigate what the audience knows from the very beginning. I certainly don't mean the very beginning of the film, but the fact that Gela is a simple watchmaker motivated by noble ideas becomes clear quite soon. This proves that the director did not intend to create a detective film. In this case, I should mention the positive sides of the film that captured my attention during the entire film and at times made me smile with pleasure and sympathy. I mean Giorgi Maskharashvili's position regarding the system, which is the key underlying of the subject line rather than the detective story.

The system, in the form of the mass media, turns Gela Nosadze into a monster before the truth is discovered. Another expression of this system is law enforcers who do not care whether a person is really guilty or not. Although one episode of the film – featuring a drunk traffic cop - is exaggerated and unconvincing, viewers feel special empathy for Giorgi Megrelishvili's character, who could not find his place and fell victim to the environment. And, finally, the system is expressed by the society that allows all the above-mentioned injustices to take place and follows like a flock of sheep what is dictated by others.

However, a flock of sheep is innocent, whereas in this society a few seconds are enough to turn a watchmaker into a maniac, a director - into a soldier and an innocent phrase, "ante christum natum", into something sounding awesome and satanic. This very phrase causes suspicion towards Gela Nosadze, although this suspicion is paradoxically dissipated by a dubious pseudo-satanic society. In this episode Giorgi Maskharashvili's sarcastic approach is most vivid. However, the allegoric animation included in the film, based on the motives of "The Beauty and the Beast", is a bit weak and trivial.

It can be concluded that the director boldly and successfully criticizes the above-mentioned system and society's tolerance for it. The director managed to show the audience "the elephant in the room", even though he slightly deviated from the dramaturgical line. However, in this case one should probably close one's eyes to this deviation. fp

Photo: Sopo Abashidze

Photo: Maka Kukulava

A Nest in "The Nest" >> Marita Matiashvili

Tornike Bziava's film "The Nest" is dedicated to the eternal theme of fathers and sons. It is a film of documentary precision without conflict.

Exposition: Everything in the film is real... characters, actions, relations ... The director reflects with nostalgic love: the sounds of the kettle and razor emerging from memory, breakfast served with Soviet aesthetics, a portrait of a deceased woman on the wall points to the family's great respect for ancestors.

Characters: Father – retired, old-aged, pedantically performing habitual actions to pass the time.

Son – caring, attentive, good guy.

He takes good care of his father and is his friend.

Maid – faithful, stereotypical old Russian woman.

Ending: The father and son go to search for a landscape from the father's memories of youth. This journey is undertaken to make the father feel necessary. The pigeons suddenly appearing in the field bear certain symbolic meaning – the Holy Spirit, peace, idyllic life, harmony... It is obvious that the director had a transcendent idea.

The camera (director of photography – Goga Devdariani) reflects the environment so lovingly and attentively that the frankness of the director is obvious.

The elder generation will be fascinated by the film. "The Nest" is a film about the Georgian tradition of relationships between parents and children. I might have agreed with the elder generation if not for this lyric intonation, dramaturgical avoidance of conflict, private limited space and my subjective opinion that children usually oppose parents and this is a precondition for development... fp

"Jonathan Livingston Seagull"
Review of Gabriel Razmadze's film "Black Mulberry"

>> Uta Beria

While discussing this film, I will quote Richard Bach's "Jonathan Livingston Seagull", often mentioned by the main characters of the film.

"To the real Jonathan Seagull who lives within us all".

The little boy who is the main character of Gabriel Razmadze's short film "Black Mulberry" lives within every man. Nika lives in Chiatura with his father. Life is dull in this small Georgian provincial town. It is boring gathering manganese in the mine; it is boring hanging planes on the ceiling (Nika's father is a miner. While father is at work, the boy entertains himself by making models of planes). Unexpectedly, a girl appears in Nika's life. Ani visits the town in summer. She lives in a big city and her "urban" behavior impresses and excites Nika. They take a cable car up a hill and throw a plane into the air.

Gabriel (Gaga) Razmadze came to filmmaking from advertising. "Black Mulberry" is his first feature film. The story is told laconically and aesthetically. This, plus the right choice of actors (Nika - Maksime Machaidze, Ani - Nata Beradze, Father - Zurab Begalishvili). Mention should be made of the brilliant work of Goga Devdariani, director of photography, who enriched the romantic line of the film with the beautiful landscapes of Chiatura.

"Reality is the embodiment of love. Perfect and pure love, untouched by space and time!"

Detached from space and time when the power goes out and they are left hanging in their cable car in mid-air, Nika and Ani want to kiss. Had they had their first kiss, things might have gone differently, but there are impeding factors (electricity is switched back on) and the cable car returns them to the earth.

Nika has not chosen the reality he lives in. He has no future plans. Ani's future is planned by her parents. The social theme is represented on the example of Nika's father - a man living in poverty, who mends his torn trousers (pointing to the absence of a woman in the family). Every day he goes to the mine and works there till nightfall. The only career he can offer his son is work in the mine. Two significant events occur simultaneously in Nika's life: he learns that Ani's parents have sold their house in Chiatura and will never return, and he follows his father's advice and starts working in the mines. The above-mentioned events occur independently from Nika. Therefore, in my opinion, the film is the story of a person who has no choice. "The road of life" takes him where he does not want to go.

The climax in the film is Nika's thoughts before he sits in the wagon that will take him down into the mine for the first time. Nika sees his future resembling the hopeless life of the miners, and imagines himself jumping off a cliff. His imaginary suicide is the end of his dreams - in this instance he becomes a man. Later, we see Nika with a helmet on his head, sitting in a wagon in a dark mine. Unfortunately, there is no light at the end of this tunnel.

However, the director then shows the model plane released by Nika and Ani in the air. The plane indicates that somewhere, high up, there is a real seagull Jonathan within each of us. fp

"The Light Bulb"

>> Neon Kavtaradze

Davit Kopaleishvili's animated film "The Light Bulb" won the competition of short animated films announced by the Georgian National Film Center in 2011, beating out 14 other participants. The film was created by the studio Reality. Formed three years ago, the studio works in the field of graphic design and three-dimensional technologies. "The Light Bulb" was the only Georgian film at the 6th International Festival of Author's Films in Batumi that was awarded a special jury prize. At the 3rd Topuzi International Festival of Animated Films, the film was named Best Internet Film.

The director of the film, Davit Kopaleishvili, is a graphic designer by profession. "The Light Bulb" is his first successful work. The script of the film and 3D graphics were created in cooperation with Paata Kopaleishvili. The music was composed by Nana Gabashvili. Animation painters are Melano Zibzibadze and Teo Baramidze. The producer of the film is Nino Jincharadze. The crew consisted only of several people. Jincharadze says she was involved in the work process and took part in "everything".

"We intended to make an animation in the three-dimensional system. It would be different from the classical hand-made animation. We wanted to create animation by means of modern technologies. So we adjusted the concept of 'The Light Bulb' to the selected style," Jincharadze says.

The theme and the form are of equal priority in the film. This is not one of those cases where only the idea is important and minimal means of expression are used. Quite the contrary, this film is based on the synthesis of "monumental" theme and "monumental work". That's why it is interesting and contemporary. From the technical point of view (I mean 3D), there are no similar animated films in present-day Georgian reality.

The key concept of the film is embodied in Socrates' quotation, presented at the end, that "There is Sun in every person, just allow it to shine". A talented and distinguished person is often unable to reveal himself. In this case, the inner light in a person gradually fades and is finally extinguished.

The action takes place in a light bulb factory. The factory is a model of the technocratic world. The person standing at the machine is a machine himself, an "animated robot" - a mechanical performer of a mechanical job. One can see only the hands of the character. His face is out of frame. This symbolizes his loss of identity. He is devoid of the ability to evaluate. In a mechanical way, he produces "healthy" and "unhealthy" bulbs. People are evaluated based on the conveyor principle, and human work resembles that of a machine.

The factory is a model of a closed society. Such a society demands that every person to be one of them. And, if a certain person is different and resembles a "shining bulb", he will be thrown into the dustbin, burnt, avoided in every way. The bulb is discarded for being "different". The message in this film, created by a non-professional director, is direct, clear and, at the same time, far from banal. Davit Kopaleishvili depicts an environment in which there is a fear of marginal persons, and the society simply disposes of them in a mechanical way. Using a 3D space, the director offers a pessimistic but realistic assessment of the above-mentioned. fp

special cinema

Renaissance Will Certainly Begin...

Every type of film is acceptable for me as long as it is not false and pretentious, but free and new

A spectator's first encounter with cinema occurs at an early age, and the impression from this encounter is often life-long. Later, each of us creates his own "videotheque", which is filled with new films and memories as time passes.

There is probably no person who does not love cinema and does not have his own attitude, feeling, and "knowledge" with regard to this youngest and most dynamic field of art.

Nicholas Rurua – Minister of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia – speaks about cinema and discusses issues such as: what cinema is and what it should be; what happened, what is currently happening and what should happen in the national film industry; what films he watches and where, what he likes and dislikes now; what kind of spectator he is and what his professional relationship is to cinema.

fp What is cinema?

For me, cinema is a kind of literature, a mixture of various interesting elements, a new and unique way of narration, a means of telling a story, a device which completely differs from those devices that existed before cinema was invented.

Before film devices and the language of cinema were elaborated, stories were told in a different way – by songs, music, literature, orally, by painting, etc. Cinema has united all the above-mentioned and a story in a film is told by music, literature, painting and so on.

fp Your first profession is film directing. You studied at the Institute of Theater and Cinema, so you observed filmmaking internally, as a participant of the creative process and not as a spectator. What are your student memories?

Currently filmmaking is not my profession, but cinema is part of my life due to the family in which I was born and brought up, and also due to the university I graduated from.

At the time of my studies everything, including education, was a mess. My student years coincided with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the rise of the national movement, endless protest marches (which were natural). The environment at the university was too relaxed. But the first 2-3 years impressed me greatly, as seeing the creative process from the inside is exciting.

I was age 3 or 4 when "Lazare" was being shot. My father was art director of this film and took me to the set. Even now, as summer comes, I remember the shooting process, because my father used to take me to the shooting locations every summer. I had seen the filmmaking process when I became a student, but I knew the theater institute was not only a peep into the creative kitchen. There I observed actors, their relations and rehearsals. I learnt what was going on in the wings, how decorations and sketches were made etc...

I remember Mikheil Tumanishvili walking in the corridor with his iconic black coat...

My teacher was Temur Chkheidze. Once he took us to the TV station where he was recording a TV performance of "Moliere" ("Bondage of Saints"), based on a play by Mikhail Bulgakov.

I remember the intervals between shootings – actors in costumes and make-up suddenly turned into ordinary people, phoned their families, bought groceries and went home carrying them after the shootings. I remember this process as an interesting one-minute film. Thus, I always observed situations and chose certain episodes for films, I entertained myself this way. In my mind, I even edited certain episodes. However, I was never involved in the filmmaking process in real life.

In the first place, there was no film equipment at the theater institute (this is still a problem and we are going to solve it in the near future). Therefore, students could only dream about shooting a film...

However, we had a lot of written assignments: we wrote small scripts (I still keep them). The process was very interesting

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

In my opinion, Georgian cinema should retain the specific national features, yet it should not be oriented towards the local market only.

and the homework was checked very carefully. I liked this kind of work, and I know for sure that at least I learnt how to write.

fp Who were your fellow-students? Who are the directors of your generation?

My fellow students and friends are famous people, for example Dato Sakvarelidze, Dato Doiashvili, Giorgi Sikharulidze... Chola [Levan Tsuladze], who is a bit older, but 20 years ago he was exactly as he is today. Many famous actors were my course-mates too... I remember Ia Parulava, she was very beautiful - and she still is - Manana Kozakova, Niko Gomelauri...

We all managed to survive the hard times and most of us are successful in the film profession.

fp Georgian cinema has always been a "cinema of generations". You have mentioned mainly directors of drama. What has your generation achieved in cinema?

I agree that Georgian cinema was a cinema of generations. During my student years the most influential were Tato Kotetishvili and Aleko Tsabadze. I think this is so far the last generation of directors who have created something interesting. One of the interesting directors is Gogita Chkonia - although he was much older than us. His films are very interesting and it will be good if they were restored, although there are certain problems in this regard.

The most significant film in that period was Temur Babluani's "The Sun of the Sleepless". I have a small role in it, but I'm so young that no one recognizes me. Temur was one of our teachers. We rarely saw him, as he was shooting the above-mentioned film, but we attended shootings and had practical lessons there. So far my generation has done nothing to go down in filmmaking history.

I think the fall of the Soviet Empire affected filmmaking greatly. Several years before my generation appeared, there were some prospects. When it was our time, the entire system was shaken and this, naturally, hampered the educational process. Filmmaking went forward by inertia. There was no inner energy and solid structure. Everything depended on the honesty and generosity of specific individuals. Such a situation could not last very long.

My generation was the last spot on the brink of a 20-year pause, which has ended now. Currently, in these very months and days, something is starting, a new movement, a new wave... I hope this process will yield more energy and create a far better system.

fp If you remember, what was the first film you watched? What was the film which impressed you most? What film did you watch "differently"? I mean, what is the beginning of film in your life?

I don't remember seeing my first film. What I can recall is the mood I had watching films at the cinema. Every weekend my grandma used to take me to the movies. She persisted in this, because she loved films.

Initially, I watched children's movies, mostly fairy-tales, made by Russian studios. The films were very good and I watched them with delight. It was a magic ritual – buying tickets, waiting till the lights went off, watching the film and so on. I penetrated into this magic world at the age of 3 or 4. I recall watching a film at the age of 12 or 13. I understood the value of film then and realized what I had to focus on.

My father's friend, film historian Tata Tvalchrelidze took me to a film house near Moscow. I watched several films and liked some of them, because I understood they were significant cinematographic works. I was especially impressed by Piter Bogdanovich's "The Last Film Screening". Later I returned to this film several times. Recently I bought a tape and I watch some episodes from time to time. This film has made a life-long impression on me.

At a young age I saw Forman's "One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest" and it touched me greatly... I also recall "Lazare", a film by Kartlos Khotivari and Buba Khotivari. At an early age I liked this film a lot. I still love "Tushetian Shepherd". I saw it when I was 10. If I am not mistaken it was released in 1978.

I was also very impressed by Giorgi Shengelaia's "Pirosmani". I still remember the feeling of sadness it aroused in me. I felt very sorry for the painter and took his tragedy too much to heart. Probably that perception was very earnest, I mean I believed and felt what I saw on the screen.
Now I am a bit of a "spoilt" spectator and observe the devices used by the director, scriptwriter, actor, etc. Involuntarily, I am more interested in devices than the content. But in my childhood I was more earnest as a spectator and the impressions were stronger.

fp What films do you watch now? Do you have time for films? What kind of films do you like?

I manage to find time to watch films. I watch everything that is of interest for me. I feel I must know what is necessary to know. I enjoy classical films, and each time I watch them, I discover something new. I have bought about 30 films by John Ford. I want to watch and analyze them later. Probably I have become a better spectator, more interested in details and less emotional.

I like to watch American author's films of the 1970s. These films snatched several important initiatives from old Hollywood. The directors turned into producers and escaped from that paradigm for a while. I mean young Bogdanovich, Coppola, Alan Pakula, Raffelson, Arthur Penn – these are the directors I like most. For instance, Orson Welles – can he ever be outdated or unknown for any filmmaker?!

I am also fond of Robert Flaherty. Jacques Tati is also very interesting and I study him again and again. John Ford is one of the greatest filmmakers, thinkers and innovators, who created devices that are used by many people nowadays. These people don't even realize that John Ford was the author of these devices.

I also enjoy the so-called French new wave. My favorite is the late Eric Rohmer. I have many of his films and I always watch them with pleasure. I watch French classical films, from which I learn a lot. I am eager to share this knowledge with the youth. Classical films are never outdated and, above all, I am interested in such films.

fp What has been done so far and what will be done in future to start the above-mentioned process i.e. the new wave of Georgian cinema and restoration of its old glory?

What is being done? This is a complex matter that needs to be analyzed from various standpoints.

For example, the Georgian National Film Center has become less local, i.e. it has established contacts worldwide. It has enriched its working methods and is more involved in the training process. EAVE (European Audiovisual Entrepreneurs) workshops were held in Tbilisi and producers were taught so-called "pitching"- project presentation to diverse foundations with the aim of getting financing.

In the Soviet period financing came from a central source. Now this system has disappeared. The disintegration of the Soviet Union is of course good, but the disadvantage is that our filmmakers are completely unprepared for this new system and unable to adjust to a market economy. This has caused a 20-year pause in filmmaking. There hasn't been a school of producers in Georgia. So our producers are making their first steps. There are only a few producers who have obtained knowledge empirically i.e. by experience and not by education. These producers are the target audience of the trainings held by Georgian National Film Center.

Together with the Ministry of Culture, the Film Center works on a short-term and medium-term strategy of film production. The key focus is made on film education and adaptation of filmmakers to modern conditions. Therefore, this strategy will be presented to the Shota Rustaveli University of Theater and Cinema. The filmmakers have to learn how to network with their colleagues without any artificial barriers. They should be able to gain financing and cooperate with foreign filmmakers as equal partners. They should know how to negotiate at all levels. They should be able to make joint projects with foreign filmmakers, to coroduce films.

All the above-mentioned is very important, as Georgian films cannot exist only on the local level. If Georgian filmmakers are oriented towards a local distasteful audience, if they are not ambitious enough, filmmaking will never develop in Georgia.

fp What kind of films should be created by producers? I mean the content, the theme and the form...

In my opinion, Georgian cinema should retain the specific national features, yet it should not be oriented towards the local market only. It should contribute to global themes and issues. A director may shoot a film in a Georgian village, but the theme must be of interest for French, American, Italian audience.

The emotion and the story of a Georgian film should be comprehensible for everyone. All the films I mentioned above, European or American, are also Georgian due to their problems, ideas and feelings, because these films reflect universal values. People are the same everywhere, they have similar problems, joys, sorrows. Therefore, if Georgian films reflect these universal human values, they will have success everywhere in the world.

Thus, Georgians should avoid the idea that we are a small nation, incapable of succeeding on the broad arena. It would be stupid to think that way.

Georgian films, especially author's films, have a potential. They will succeed if they do not lose their individuality and showcase this individuality to modern spectators in a contemporary language i.e. if the devices are modern and the content is national.

The themes, content and technical facilities in Georgian films should not be restricted. The films should tell stories in a comprehensible language. I think in Georgia there are millions of good stories. They simply need to be told in a proper way. There are numerous interesting real-life stories, so scriptwriters don't even have to invent things. Thus, what we have to learn is a modern way of story-telling, based on modern technology and the contemporary language of cinema. Of course, technical facilities are very important. We also need people who know how to use these facilities. The strategic vision also involves identification of the potential target audience.

Georgian cinema is author's cinema and it has always been like that. We have to retain this tradition. It would be irrational for us to compete with countries with their own large-scale film industries. We should take into account that filmmaking is a luxury that costs money. However, we can take advantage of our nature, landscapes, talented actors, etc. We should make quality, non-commercial films, oriented towards an audience with good taste. I think this is quite possible.

However, films should also include entertaining elements. The audience cannot watch only hard, serious films about problems. One famous American director said: for me, the main thing in a film is that it

The emotion and the story of a Georgian film **should be comprehensible for everyone**

must be genuine. If the director manages to make a genuine film, its beauty will see to itself. Thus, anything that is told in a genuine way becomes beautiful and attractive.

I agree with the opinion that films must be beautiful, attractive, interesting, provocative, entertaining, etc. There is no unique manner of narration, much as there is no one best form of film language. Every narration that tells something new to the audience is of interest. For me, all kinds of films are acceptable as long as they are not false and pretentious, but are free and new. Copying of something that has been created in the past simply doesn't work.

Any beginning director may be influenced by someone, but later he has to find his own manner of narration. Currently there are interesting directors in India, Pakistan, and Iran. A new generation of directors has appeared in Europe. They are bored with dull films and are looking to start a new, energetic wave. Let's see what they will achieve. There are certain signs of innovation already. The same can be said about music, literature and other fields of art. It can be concluded that we are in a pre-renaissance period and the renaissance will certainly begin...

In Georgia, like in other post-Soviet states, the talent and energy has built up and it has to flow out... It will flow in a very interesting form, including cinema. I am confident of this and I hope Georgia will be prepared for the active phase of the process: there will be film professionals, producers and directors capable of telling stories in a modern and comprehensible language. Every person has something to say, but if he is unable to speak, he won't say anything. This ability to speak is the use of technical facilities, and this should be a priority for film directors.

The same applies to film dramaturgy. We have a shortage of scriptwriters, because many of them lack practice. Practice is more important than theory. So there should be technical facilities that enable filmmakers to shoot films and learn in the process of working. That's why provision of equipment for the students of the theater institute is a pressing task. We also plan to implement reforms at the university, because I am skeptical about the current educational process there. So reform is absolutely necessary.

I would like to underline that there is a lot of creative energy in Georgia. This energy needs to be implemented in narration. I'm sure good narrators will appear soon. There are youngsters mastering the profession who will, hopefully, use their knowledge in their creative work.

I am optimistic about the future of Georgian cinema, despite many impeding factors like the internet, television, the music video industry, computer games, etc. Films are different, and I believe people will be sensible enough to retain and protect genuine cinema from these aggressive competitors.

I am far from thinking that everything has been said and shot. There is still much to tell. Life goes on, and there will always be something interesting and new to narrate in a film. Finally, let me wish success to the young filmmakers. I hope the number of film viewers will increase tenfold and more within a couple of years.

>> Lela Ochiauri

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

If We Want to Develop Georgian Cinema...
We should be mobilized to make a leap forward

It is certainly evident that there have been serious achievements in Georgian cinema of late. In this case I don't mean creative processes or the quantity and quality of films produced. I focus on the development of old and new film professions, the success of Georgian films at the international markets, awareness about new rules of the game and the search for new ways of winning in this globally competitive sector.

Those were the topics discussed with Tamara Tatishvili, director of Georgian National Film Center. With her ideas, action leadership, all the above-mentioned is planned and implemented.

fp What are the new developments at the Georgian National Film Center and what is being done in order to support the development of film production in Georgia?

There are so many things to be done in order to revitalize Georgian film Sector. Most important, though, is the vision and belief that Georgian cinema tradition is capable of a comeback - in a new, unique form. It is without question that we need to support the film value chain on all levels – development, production, distribution and international promotion. This is how I started, identifying weaknesses and working on them with a common vision and energy within the sector.

Special attention is paid to the involvement of Georgian talent into various international platforms. The Film Center has been actively involved in various film markets like Marche du Film, European Film Market, and other smaller, project-focused platforms such as Connecting Cottbus, Trieste Cross-border Meetings and others. Our intention is the same: Georgian filmmakers attend project markets and present projects in development to foreign producers, potential financiers, film foundations of various countries, sales agents, etc. To me it is crucially important to have Georgians integrated into those programs. This is how you get other professionals to hear your voice...

Our major problem is finding partners outside Georgia. This can be explained by our recent history. During the past 15-20 years nothing was done in the sector. Be-

Most important, though, is the vision and belief that Georgian cinema tradition is capable of a comeback – **in a new, unique form**

fore that there was the Soviet Union, with its totally different system and approach towards film production. The transition from a planned economy to a market economy was painful. Therefore, there is nothing surprising in the fact that we are not as actively involved in the current film processes, as France or Estonia. In addition, Georgian production companies nowadays are not as developed as, for instance, Romanian and Polish ones are.

However, this argument is not sufficient for us to be pampered with regard to international cooperation. We know the reason, but foreign companies do not care about it much. Such issues are dealt with at various panel discussions. Yet, when a Georgian producer attends a film market, he has to play according to the "business to business" rules. Emotions, feelings, explanation of reasons are unnecessary and uninteresting when it comes to a concrete financing deal.

Therefore, I keep repeating: if we want to develop Georgian cinema, the field must be professionalized. One or two producers are not enough. We need to focus on building up the institution of the creative producer. Film projects should be developed in a "non-Georgian" way.

fp What do you mean by "non-Georgian" development of projects?

Traditionally, film making process in Georgia was perceived as entirely creative process and project development was regarded as having a secondary and even tertiary importance. In the open market economy, film makers have to compete for the limited financial resources as much as other sector representative and having great ideas isn't enough for the success, we need well developed great ideas..

Project development should be viewed as an important part of the entire film production process. There should be sufficient time for the development of the idea and the script. Several drafts of the script should be created – all of them well thought-out and critical. This should not be done only upon the request of a financier. Above all, the story should be strong and well-elaborated. When a producer writes about his motivation as to why he wants to shoot the film, it has to be written in the appropriate format. The above-mentioned is closely connected with the second priority of the GNFC, professional training, which is one of the major priorities for 2011. In this regard, we have implemented two significant programs.

One of them is "Mini EAVE Georgia", a training for European audiovisual entrepreneurs. Last year we had negotiations with the EAVE team at the Marche du Film in Cannes. In March the EAVE team arrived in the Caucasus for the first time. The second project is MAYA Workshop – a European training program for beginners and students in the film sector. This year we financed a grant, which was awarded to Papuna Mosidze, allowing him to attend three workshops of the training. The third important educational achievement was partnership with Robert Bosch Stiftung Coproduction Prize program. This has led to concrete results: GNFC / Robert Bosch Stiftung Industry meetings to be organized in Georgia aimed at enhancing the professional knowledge of young Georgian professionals.

Photo: Maka Kukulava

Photo: Maka Kukulava

fp Thus, the activities of Georgian National Film Center have brought concrete results.

We may say so. I enjoy seeing concrete results of our activities.

We started negotiations about EAVE and MAYA Workshops representatives in Cannes in 2010 and already in 2011 we organized respective trainings.

In 2010 I was invited to the Molodist festival in Ukraine and I presented the Film Center at the mini project market "BOAT Meeting". There I first met the representatives of Bosch Stiftung. Our negotiations resulted in a joint project in 2011 too.

I carefully observe the forms of development of cinema in various small countries. Many of them are far more developed than us, e.g. the Balkan region. On the one hand, they had a period of talent explosion and they used it correctly. Thus, films were created by Milcho Manchevski, Danis Tanovic and others 12-15 years ago. Later on, they occupied their proper niche.

Despite the geopolitical issues of the Balkans, they positioned themselves with the rest of the world as one cultural/film region. This is what I call intellect and the right policy. With the exception of the festivals at Cannes and Berlin, the festival in Sarajevo is the most significant in the film space to me. It is visited by all major film institutions and companies. If we had analyzed all of the above-mentioned and united Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, an interesting and important market would have been created. However, Azerbaijan and Armenia have no diplomatic dialogue, and Russia and Georgia are in a sensitive situation too. The geopolitical situation hampers cooperation. Filmmakers try to overcome these political barriers and I hope that film will become a domain where cross cultural cooperation will be genuinely impressive in the region.

On the other hand, the countries that considered us too underdeveloped for international film cooperation are opening up now. Georgia is earning its place on the global film map. However, another issue arises here: what films can we offer?

I would like to underline here that the supply should match the demand.

Nowadays no-one can say that there is no interest towards Georgia. The Film

Once we transmit cinematic images of authentic Georgian stories, **there will be no borders which cannot be crossed**

Center strives to establish relations and cooperation in every possible direction. The director of a rather established festival once told me: "I may allow a comparatively weak Georgian film to participate in our festival, but only once. Otherwise the reputation of our festival will be damaged". Our ambition is to unlock access to interesting film stories locally. This is why we focus on professional training and project development. We are confident that, should proper professional conditions be created, an interesting generation of Georgian filmmakers will emerge. A couple of successful films in recent years, such as "The Other Bank" by George Ovashvili and "Street Days" by Levan Koghuashvili strengthen our belief that Georgian film policy development is on the right track.

fp Many directors attend film markets and festivals nowadays. This means they have something to offer.

It is part of Georgian psychology never to admit that we don't know something. We have to overcome this. When you start to learn things, you do all things better. We often mention that we Georgians are a nation with a great film tradition. The train has passed us by. Now we have to catch up with it and even overtake it. We have lost ten years and now we have to make it up. We have to mobilize ourselves to make a leap forward. What was introduced in Europe in 2001 is being introduced in Georgia in 2011. The distance will not become shorter. I know this is difficult, but this is reality for Georgia. If we want to leap forward, we must leap forward. If there are no interesting stories in three or four years, I will say (from whatever position) that there mustn't be constant subsidizing of cinema. However, if cinema is a priority and we support it, then we should follow the standards.

One or two films are not enough. We all have to work hard at the stage of development so that production and promotion are less risky. There will always be exceptions - some films will be interesting and achieve success, but a film industry as such (in which a producer can earn his living by being just a producer and not working elsewhere and returning to films for two hours in the evening) will not develop. Now everything is mixed up. If we don't want to change things, we will just go on taking pride in what has been done so far. Of course, it is my great desire to see the Georgian film industry as a developed sector. Therefore, I am ready to help to professionalize every field of cinema.

fp How did you get involved in compiling an economic map of Georgian film sector?

It has become clear recently that the film industry is popular among other sectors. Everyone says filmmaking is a priority, and this is good, but I am afraid that wrong decisions may be taken if all sector representatives do not really understand film value chain and specificities of the sector. A recent Hungarian case also alarmed me a bit. We commissioned the mapping study to see what is going on in the film industry, how many people are employed and how much foreign investment has been attracted. We are working with an experienced British company, BOP Consulting. Under their guidance we are envisaging a rather interesting Mapping Report. This will support our arguments locally and help us make precisely informed decisions. I observe and study the existing drawbacks constantly. Next year we should announce a program of script development grants. This will strengthen the knowledge of Georgian script-writers and will improve cooperation between local producers and writers at the early stage of film project development.

In general, I am determined to support the nurturing of the young film generation in Georgia. I want to see unpretentious, yet brave new films. Impressive films are the result of collective work. In present-day Georgia we all have to work hard. Only in this case will our films be exceptional. Once we transmit cinematic images of authentic Georgian stories, there will be no borders which cannot be crossed.

>> Lela Ochiauri

"Formalism", "Anti-Soviet" Art and Mikheil Kobakhidze

"I was never interested in anything Anti-Soviet or Soviet," says the director. His eccentric and unusual characters did not fit into the dull reality of the "stagnation period". Like their author, they created their own space, a bit stylized and theatrical. For the director, masks were a means negating social mimicry and a kind of self-defense.

Authorities and films, myth and reality – 72-year-old Georgian director Mikheil Kobakhidze discussed these themes in an interview...

fp You were Sergey Gerasimov's student. He played a significant role in your life, not only during your studies but also later, when you suffered great hardships. Please tell us about him and the period of your studies.

It was very hard to enter the Institute, so I had little hope. This was the only film institute in the USSR. In Tbilisi I tried to enter the Theatrical Institute, Department of Acting, but I failed all the acting exams.

fp However, you are very artistic and you acted marvelously in the film "Musicians".

As soon as I entered the Institute in Moscow, they took us to the country to harvest potatoes. I felt as if I were a prisoner. Several days later we returned to Moscow. The Institute newsletter wrote that I avoided work and only entertained the girls. So I had to be expelled from the Institute. I got scared, but my teachers saved me. Our studio brought together actors and directors. In the first year we were made to direct silent sketches that would reveal our abilities. Everyone except me used dialogues.

In my second year I directed "Uncles' Dream" based on Dostoyevskiy's story. Gerasimov then said that this play would be a diploma work for the actors. To tell the truth, later on Sandro Svetlov [the son of Rodam Amirejibi and Mikheil Svetlov] restored this performance. The restored performance was very different from the original one, although the text and the actors were the same. Emotion, rhythm, nuances – all this had disappeared. I had made a stage adaptation of the story myself, introduced lots of improvisations in the text, both ironic and equivocal.

fp As far as I know, this was your only stage direction work. Even in France you never staged any play...

I have always wanted to stage a play, but so far I haven't managed to... Then I wrote a script "Young Love" and started shooting in the Institute's studio. While at the Institute I also shot "Carousel". The negatives of these films were destroyed in Moscow in the 80s, because they wanted to extract silver. What barbarism! When I was a student, Gerasimov used to say: "You can do everything here, so use this chance; this will be impossible later on". To tell the truth, I was surprised then. I wanted to make the audience happy, and it was unimaginable at that time that in future I would be deprived of this right. I remember we needed extras while shooting some film. We painted "Mosfilm" on a bus and cheated people. Later we learned that people arrived at Mosfilm to receive their fees. When I submitted "Carousel", Gerasimov declared that it was formalism and the Soviet people were reflected as a flock of sheep. Later he congratulated me and helped me to pass the exams as an external student. Thus, in my third year of studies, I started working as a director at the Georgian Film studio.

fp That is when you created "The Wedding" – the only film readily accepted by the officials.

Initially I worked on a different film. When the management of the studio saw it, they prohibited me from completing the shootings. There was an episode in this film: people gather at the main square and hear a voice from the heavens: "How are you, people?" The answer is "So-so". The minister of film demanded that I cut this scene. I said I would change it and the people would answer "We are fine". In fact, this would sound even more ironic. Finally, the film was eliminated without being sent to Moscow. What I wanted was to complete my studies at the Institute, but

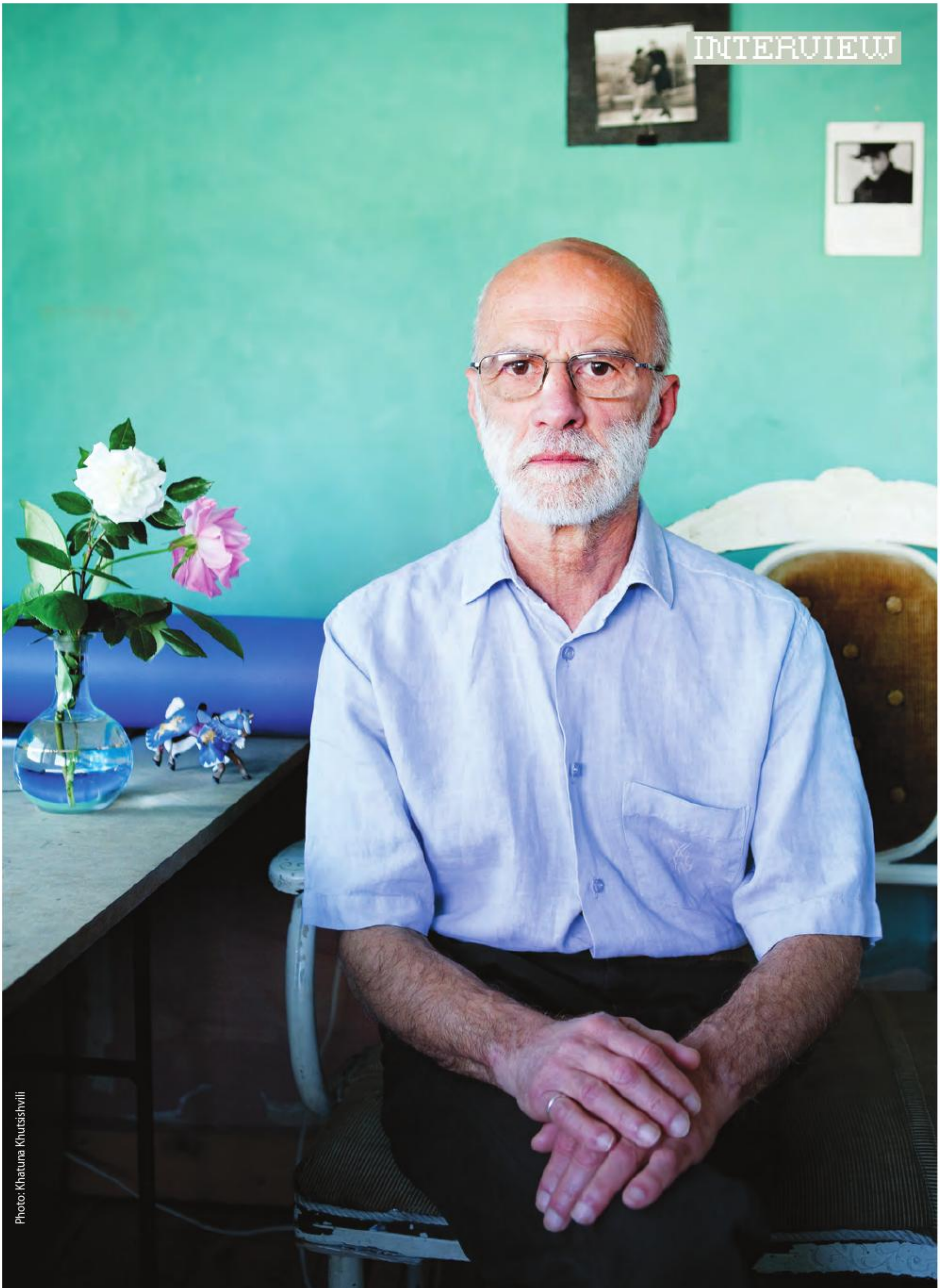
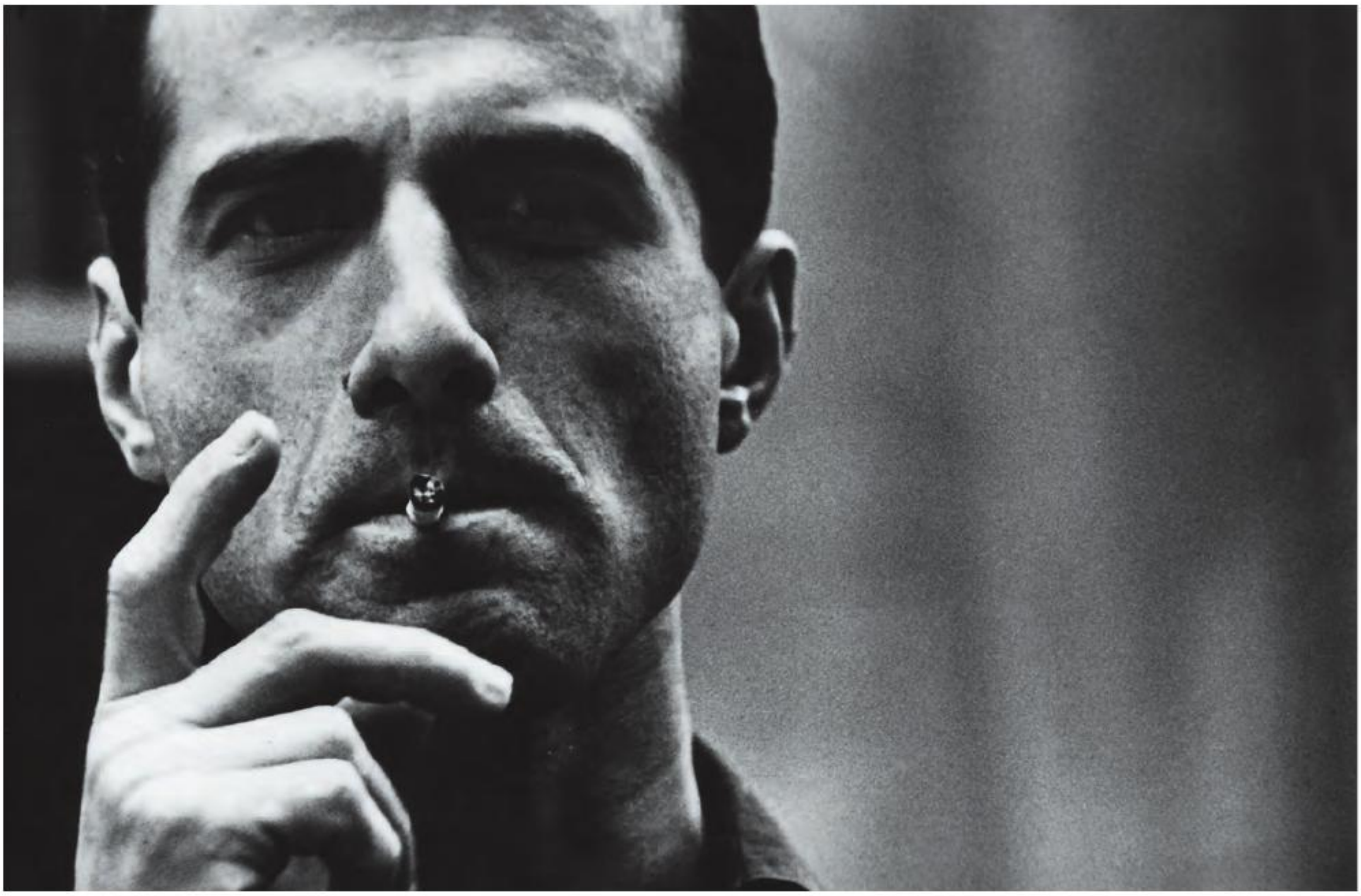


Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili



in fact I nearly had to end my film career. I dreamed of one thing, but I got a totally different thing. This is the main theme in "The Wedding" and in all my life. Yet, I hoped for better future. I remember I wrote the script of "The Wedding" on a torn sheet of paper in the studio corridor. I took it to Kako Dzidziguri, the head of Georgian state TV. He said: "I respect you, my daughter Medea respects you, everyone respects you, but it would be better if you had written the script on normal paper". Still, he allowed me shoot this film.

fp The style of your films is original. They are not comedies or so-called slapstick. You don't use dialogues, but the shooting manner differs from the aesthetics of silent films. For instance, general views are frequent in your films. The comic effect is not caused by the situation but the earnestness of the characters. It is natural that you are accused of formalism. Please tell us about the barriers the authorities created for your films.

In 1966 I started to shoot "Umbrella". A commission arrived from Moscow to see the materials. They said: "Do you mean to spend the State budget on such absurdity? It is formalism, the idea is vague. Such a film will not be shown in Moscow". They demanded a stop to production. I finished the film with my own money and took it to Gerasimov. He pulled some strings for me at Goskino [State Film] and the film was accepted. Then there was a full-length film, "Oops!", for which I made the last part – "Musicians".

Georgian Film studio sent a letter to Moscow, saying that I was unprofessional, impudent, freethinking, attracted to abstract art. My shootings were stopped upon the order of Soviet Minister of Cinema A. Romanov. I was deprived the right to work as a director. I was accused of formalism, blind imitation of the West, abstractionism and, what's most important, lack of ideas. I started to struggle. I wrote a letter to Brezhnev, although I knew the letter would never reach him. Yet, there was a result – my right to work as a director was restored, but my later scripts were not approved.

I hate when my films are compared to films with Chaplin, Jacques Tati or Buster Keaton. I use completely different means of expression. I used to bring separate actors to the set and give them absolutely controversial tasks. They were embar-

Photo: personal archive

Mikheil Kobakhidze (left)
With son Gega
Kobakhidze

rassed, so their surprise was frank, natural and comic. I was more interested in the Hollywood of the 1930s and 40s and in social drama.

fp What about your later life? They say Merab Mamardashvili called you "a person of natural gifts". How did he assess the existing reality? Please tell us also about Sergey Parajanov and his arrest.

I hate to recall the years when I was prohibited to work. I usually forget unpleasant moments. Merab used to say "Probably they are going to stay forever," but the communist regime fortunately ended. Once a theater from Leningrad arrived to perform Blok's "12". My wife, Jana Petraitite, who performed the main part in "Umbrella", stood up and shouted "Reds, Go Home!". During the intermission, Parajanov came to us and said: "When the KGB visits you, tell them you shouted: "Sergey, let's go home!" By the way, the KGB didn't visit us. Sergey Parajanov often imitated Brezhnev and laughed at his speeches. He was punished for acting so freely. In 1981 Shevardnadze [then head of the Georgian Communist Party] called me and said: "make whatever films you want, even if they are anti-Soviet. Someone has to tell the truth." I was never interested in anything anti-Soviet, or Soviet for that matter. I simply did not fit in the frames of the official culture. I planned to make a film about Tbilisi and started to collect materials. Then a family tragedy happened that changed my entire life.

fp You probably mean your son Gega [member of a group of young people who were arrested and later executed for attempting to hijack a plane in Georgia in 1983]. At that time, the "hijackers" were accused in terrorism, later they were called heroes. Every regime used them at its discretion, every change in the situation brought about different assessments. The real story is still unknown. Your father was a counter-revolutionary and never recognized the Soviet government. You have always wanted to leave the USSR. The dissident spirit was constantly present in your family. Therefore, what Gega did was logical.

I always wanted to leave the USSR, but it was hard. My family was large – my wife, three children, my parents. I did not allow my daughters to attend

Mikheil Kobakhidze, from shooting place of "Musicians"

Soviet schools. I did not want their souls to be damaged. For 11 years, the authorities called me and threatened to arrest me if I did not take my daughters to school. Unfortunately, unlike his grandfather, who escaped execution in 1953, Gega was shot. My father stood strong as his grandson was arrested. For a year, he hoped that Gega would escape death like him and history would be repeated. Father died five days after Gega was shot.

In 1953, on the day of Stalin's death, my father took me to the mourning ceremony. Sirens sounded. I looked at my father and got scared because he had not taken his hat off. They could have beaten or detained him. I pulled at his coat and said quietly: "Please take off your hat". He answered: "I have come here to keep my hat on".

fp There was a meeting at the film studio which resembled a court trial. Lots of people had gathered, including disguised employees of the KGB. Your colleagues blamed you. They remembered how you painted the grand piano first in white then in black while working on the set. Only Nikoloz Sanishvili and Rezo Esadze dared to support you openly. However, lots of people supported you covertly (the director of the Film Studio Rezo Chkheidze was unable to attend the meeting as he was in Paris). In the 1990s you arrived in Paris where you were received very well.

As soon as I arrived in Paris, everything went on well. Retrospectives of my films were held in Venice, Berlin, London, Canada, Japan. One of the famous movie-theaters in Paris screened my films for three months and they were attended by a lot of people. I wrote scripts that won competitions. I have written scripts for several short and three full length films.

fp Is your daughter Anna the prototype of the main character in your script "As a Cloud"?

Yes she is. Anna's birth brought me back to life. I wanted to make a black-and-white film without dialogue. It is a fable about the change of time. Man dreams and makes plans, but reality is usually different.

>> Irina Demetradze

Photo: personal archive

"When the storytelling goes bad in a society, the result is decadence" Aristotle

Interview with Kote Jandieri

fp "When the storytelling goes bad in a society, the result is decadence". How would you explain this quotation?

"Story-telling" is a broader concept than literature, although literature (i.e. expression of thoughts and emotions by means of graphic symbols) is part of this concept. Homer used to tell stories, but he did not write anything. His oral storytelling, to be more precise, his songs, were transferred from generation to generation and formed the culture of listening, narrating and expression of opinion. For centuries this was a standard for precision of expression, and none of the narrators, philosophers, orators, law-reformers and judges of that civilization violated this standard.

Apart from fiction literature, storytelling embraces historical essays i.e. adventures of people and persons living in a concrete period; philosophy, as the story of perception and cognition of the universe by a human being; law i.e. legal formalization of natural justice in a concrete state and at a given epoch; religious texts i.e. the relations between god(s) and humankind, etc. In any case, storytelling means certain quality – clarity of ideas, adequateness of the linguistic tissue and lexical precision.

The tradition and practice of good storytelling, in a sociological sense, is auto-training of the society, a permanent exercise of thinking, an indicator of social mentality. When the quality of storytelling deteriorates, it points to certain problems of the society, the increase of entropy within the society, the threat of chaos and, eventually, complete degradation, fragmentation and savagery. When TV performers abuse certain words, it seems it's just their problem, but later on words are wrongly used by other performers, orators, lawyers, teachers, writers, etc. Thus, the society is unaware of what is right and what is wrong. If this tendency does not improve, if every citizen starts to tell stories ignoring the accepted standards, it will soon be impossible to understand one another and the language tissue uniting the society will fall apart. This will entail deterioration of thinking. Thus, Aristotle was right when he called this decadence.

fp Films reflect reality in a most impressive way. The main reason for the decadence (crisis) of contemporary Georgian cinema is usually the lack of good storytellers (dramatists). What are the key problems facing contemporary Georgian films and what are they caused by?

Above all, I think it is an exaggeration that films reflect reality in a most impressive way. A film is one of the instruments of reflecting reality. It has specific means and language used for story-telling. People use these instruments differently.

As for dramaturgy, it defines the logic of the story to be told by the film, the sequence of events, the degree of subject-line or intellectual tension. Obviously, this component of the film needs maximum closeness to logic. Thus, there are certain rules, and their violation is admissible for the sake of a certain artistic task. However, it is inadmissible to be unaware of dramaturgic laws.

Alexander Mitta, a film director and the author of a manual of film dramaturgy, once noted that Russian Soviet cinema was "the most ambitious and, at the same time, the most ignorant" in the world. Mitta, above all, meant the ignorance of film dramaturgy and not the level of creative thinking in general.

The fact is that dramaturgy operates with certain stereotypes. Some people consider this primitivism, insufficient artistic attitude, over-rationalism and mere routine. I argue this, because the knowledge of dramaturgic laws and stereotypes leads creative impulses in the right direction and frees the author from excessive burden and waste of time, enables fantasy and imagination to work more efficiently.

If we destroy the banks of the river and its bed, it will turn into a marsh. Sometimes the river flows out of its bed, but ultimately it either finds a new bed or returns to the old one. The work of a storyteller resembles this hypothetical river. A talented story-teller destroys old stereotypes and creates new ones. Violation of the rules of the game does not mean abolishment of these rules. Ignorance of the rules means non-professionalism.

The older generation of Georgian film directors, whose films triumphed worldwide, studied at Moscow State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK) where the basics of dramaturgy were taught by Arbuzov, Grebnev and other prominent script-writers. If we study the films by Otar Iosseliani, Gela Kandelaki, Mikheil Kobakhidze and others, we will notice the mathematic precision in the structure of their stories. There are brilliant examples of story-telling, such as "Salt for Svaneti", "Eliso", "My Grandmother", "Keto and

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

Kote", "Alaverdoba", "Unusual Exhibition" "Great Green Valley", "Tushetian Shepherd" , "Love at First Sight", and "Lazare".

Numerous wonderful scripts have been written in Georgia, but, unlike Russia, Europe and especially the USA, a strong script-writing school has not been developed. Therefore, the following generation of script-writers told good stories based on their talent and intuition. There are numerous examples: "The Sun of the Sleepless", "Night Dance", "The New Year", "Day", etc. However, only a few individual cases were successful.

The failure of the recent high-budget co-production "Five Days of August" proves that the key problem in the Georgian film industry is not the lack of financing or talent, but shortcomings in storytelling.

fp To return to Aristotle's words, what are the causes of decadence in contemporary culture? Are these causes related to the problem of education?

Certainly there is a link between the two. If we read the texts of conceptual documents that formed basis for the educational reform eight years ago, we will see an amazing thing: the lack of elementary language competence, complete darkness of speech and total lack of rational thought. This vagueness, the crookedness of style and thought automatically passed on to normative acts and methodological rules, national curricula and manuals. One writes as one thinks, one acts as one thinks, one gets results appropriate to his actions.

fp A little while ago Gogi Gvakharia assessed the incident at Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University saying "the students raised their voice for the first time against 'the Soviet Union' in the education system". Do you think there is a need to introduce changes in the newly-reformed education system, or should we believe the rector who says "If you don't like it, just go away!"?

Such a suggestion from the head of an institute of higher learning proves that there is a deep crisis in the system and the prevalence of weird ideas regarding the aims and objectives of education, as well as total incompetence and boundless cynicism. I think higher education in Georgia is too expensive and of low quality, with a few exceptions. Where should we obtain quality education? Abroad? That is why every year we lose talented youngsters who are rich enough to study at Harvard, Oxford or at Bendukidze's expensive university.

fp You teach dramaturgy to MA students. Do you think it is correct not to teach dramaturgy to BA students?

Dramaturgy is a field of human relations. Apart from objective laws, it demands certain life experience. In order to construe impressive dramatic events, one should have suffered dramatic events at least once in a lifetime, one has to have made his choice, and I don't think teenagers have this experience. Therefore, introduction of a dramaturgical course for BA students is a waste of money.

In my opinion, BA students specializing in film direction should be given the basics of dramaturgy so that they are able to use professional language when dealing with script-writers. As for the specialty of film dramaturgy, it should be taught only to MA students. Only in this case will the necessary results be achieved.

fp Film dramaturgy is partly a technical specialty. What are your methods of teaching?

I completely agree with you. Film dramaturgy is not a subject like philosophy, psychology, ethics or poetry. If it can be taught at all, it should be taught as a technical discipline. Therefore – as I am sure you remember - our theoretical classes resembled algebra lessons rather than disputes about art. However, at times we tried to make lyrical-philosophical deviations to make the students think, imagine and write.

fp "My cinema"...

"My Cinema" is a film in which neither the work of the director, nor that of director of photography or the art director or the script-writer is too obvious. My film is devoid of moralizing and didactics. The actors do not bother me with their refined action and there is no space between the audience and the screen. When I watch such films, I forget my daily routine, health problems and disturbing thoughts. Unfortunately, such films are rare. I can name an Iranian film "Turtles Can Also Fly". I advise you to see this film.

fp Advice to Young Script-Writers

You want me to cram a two-year course of lectures in one interview? OK, I'll try to be brief.

Never start thinking about a future script with general sentences, philosophic arguments, wise maxims and proverbs. On the contrary, try to make your story simple, true to life, and well thought out, and it will by all means give rise to clever ideas. Get closely acquainted with your main character.

Try to understand his secret wishes and ambitions; create obstacles for him to overcome, make his choice difficult. In this case, the audience will sympathize with your main character. Make your character experience temporary success and unexpected failures, so that his mood constantly vacillates between happiness and misery, euphoria and despair. Write precisely and laconically, without excessive adjectives. And, finally, remember that your script should have a beginning, a middle and an end. That's it! Good Luck!

>> Maka Kukulava, Uta Beria

"Subjective Documentary Cinema"
Interview with Salome Jashi

In the beginning, there was the word. And this word was "Silence!"- silence broken only by the sound of the camera. A director is a demiurge whose creation is evolutionary: film, Betacam, HD, digital device, 3D format – the creation of new life. Wim Wenders called the 3D format an ideal device for the documentary filmmaker, probably because modern technologies make the spectator part of the screen reality and revive the mummified times of Andre Bazin. In Georgia nobody makes documentary films in this format. To tell the truth, documentary films are rare as such. One documentary director, Salome Jashi, has an interesting vision and produces fascinating documentaries.

fp What are the problems related to documentary film production and distribution?

One of the main problems (both in documentary and feature film production) is related to property tax. Suppose film production costs 10,000 USD. TV station, which is chief buyer of documentary films, buy a screening license for the laughable sum of 70 USD. The producer of the film has to pay property tax annually. This tax is one per cent of the entire budget of the film. In this case, 100 USD per year. Thus, one pays more tax than his income is. This tax is to be paid annually throughout your life. If you fail to pay it, copyrights and sales rights are transferred to the state. Due to this problem in the law, I transferred all the rights on my latest film, "Bakhmaro", to a German co-producer who is responsible for distribution. However, this compromise has its negative impact – buyers ask us to sell the film to them. We are unwilling to bear losses due to the above-mentioned error in the law. Therefore, we address the German company, which refuses to sell the film due to low profit prospects. Thus, Georgian TV will never broadcast this film. This might be possible only if we donate this film to them.

fp How fruitful is the cooperation between documentary filmmakers and TV stations?

Communication with TV stations is a separate problem. In Europe TV stations are often among the financiers, especially with regard to documentary films. In Georgia, television companies never invest in independent film production and pay very little for the screening license, e.g. the price of an hour film on Public Broadcaster in average is 100 USD. PIK TV [state-funded Russian-language channel] is more generous, yet it pays much

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

There are many directors who start making documentaries **and later move on to feature films**

less than TV stations in other countries. "Bakhmaro" was financed by French, German, Finnish, Dutch and Polish public broadcasters... Foreign public broadcasters invest in Georgian i.e. foreign filmmaking, which is usual practice for them.

fp Documentary filmmakers Nino Kitradze and Rusudan Chkonia are now involved in feature filmmaking. What does it mean? Have documentary films lost their function, or have these directors realized that feature films are more commercially profitable?

There are many directors who start making documentaries and later move on to feature films. This does not mean that documentary filmmaking has lost its function. This is simply a choice of a creative person. My favorite director, Sergei Dvortsevoy, made fascinating documentaries that have utterly changed my attitude to documentaries and greatly influenced my vision as a director. Several years ago he declared he would never shoot documentaries again, because he regretted manipulating people according to his will. At that time I did not realize what he meant. Later, when I became a director, I understood how difficult it is to create documentary films. What may lead to the success of the film may be detrimental to the main character. In feature cinema one is less responsible for the fate of concrete people.

fp A feature film may be more profitable, but, as a rule, its budget is higher. A documentary film can be made with minimal funds and still be interesting. In certain cases even a crew is not obligatory – at the same time you can be a director, cameraman, sound engineer, editor and even the main character.

In the past decade the situation in Georgia was extremely hard. It is still far from perfect. However, documentary films reflecting this reality are rare.

Earlier there was no tradition of such films. Documentaries made in Soviet Georgia were of the essay type. Later, there appeared films by Toma Chagelishvili and Discovery Channel documentaries. Therefore, the perception of documentary filmmaking was different then. However, such films represent only one segment of documentary filmmaking. In the Soviet times, the reality could not be reflected unadorned. A documentary director could create either propaganda films or movies about works of art. In frequent cases, documentaries are critical about the subject they deal with. This trend is obvious throughout the world. The festivals also illustrate that documentary films tend to add question marks rather than offer conclusions. A documentary director should not try to persuade the audience, as is the case in propaganda films.

fp You directed "The Leader is Always Right", which was greatly appreciated by the audience. Have you been labeled as biased or opposition-supportive director?

I consider this film my weakest work. It became popular due to the topicality of its theme. The theme was important and we made the film after the Russian-Georgian war at a Patriotic Camp. The theme overshadowed the cinematographic quality of the film. I don't know whether I have been given such a label, but, unfortunately, in Georgia I have become popular only due to this film.

fp Nowadays feature filmmakers are using the 3D format. This format is also requested by producers. Do you think documentary films should use the 3D format too? Will it be interesting for the audience?

Recently I watched Werner Herzog's new documentary "Cave of Forgotten Dreams" made in 3D. This is a film about 300 unique drawings discovered in a cave in France. These drawings are 30,000 years old. The archaeological expedition to the cave was planned by Herzog himself. I watched the film in a theater. Herzog probably used the 3D format to create the atmosphere of a cave. However, the film had some technical shortcomings. I think documentary filmmaking is not ready for the 3D format yet. Currently the technical aspects of this novelty are not conducive to spontaneity. Documentary films are often based on spontaneity, therefore it is often impossible to set up a frame and install artificial lights.

fp Which director influenced you most?

Sergei Dvortsevoy. His film "Bread Day", made in the 1990s, impressed me most. I saw it on VHS when I studied in London. It was an old spoilt film and the colors were blurred. However, the film touched me so deeply that it is still with me in my life. Since then, I have seen it again and again. I watched it on film in a theater last year (with original colors) and I felt as if I was watching it for the first time. This is a film about a small residential area No. 3, near St Petersburg, which is inhabited only by elderly retired people. Once a week a train arrives and leaves a carriage on the rails. The carriage is loaded with bread. Elderly people push the carriage with their frozen hands... This scene and the entire film are very expressive.

fp What film are you creating now?

I am working on a Latvian project "15 Young by Young". One director from each post-Soviet state makes a 15-minute film for this project. Each film should reflect the 20 years of independence. The partner of the series is Arte, the French-German Public Broadcaster.

>> Giorgi Kalatozishvili

This Film Is as Important for the History of Georgian Cinema as "The Night In the Panther's Skin" is for Georgian Literature

Restoring "Akaki Tsereteli's Trip to Racha and Lechkhumi"...

>> Nana Janelidze

I knew as a legend that there was the first Georgian full length documentary made in 1912 - "Akaki Tsereteli's Trip to Racha and Lechkhumi", about the famous poet's visit to northern regions of Georgia. I knew its author and director of photography was Vasil Amashukeli, and that the film consisted of 5 parts. However, I did not remember seeing the film.

Several years ago Nino Natroshvili, Marina Kereselidze and I worked on the TV program "Laterna Magica". Once we were discussing "Akaki's Trip" and Marina said she had an idea with regard to this film. So she shared the idea with us.

Some days later I was at a party together with a famous Georgian businessman. He was asking me about current developments in the Georgian film industry. Then he said he would gladly support an interesting project in this field.

So I told him about "Akaki's Trip" and explained that this film is the foundation of Georgian cinema. I talked about the concept, and the artistic value and importance of the film. I also told him about the project we intended to implement. The businessman was delighted and asked me to bring the project to him as soon as possible.

I rushed to Marina and Nino. Of course, the project had not been drawn up yet, but we soon elaborated it and took it to the businessman. However, the budget was high and the businessman refused.

The next day I ran into Nika Vacheishvili, who was the minister of culture at the time. Of course, I told him the story and he asked me to submit the project to the ministry. This was in 2007.

Akaki is an issue freely discussed by everyone, as the great writer belongs to the entire Georgian nation. Therefore, I freely discussed our project with everyone. In the meantime, I began to realize the importance of Akaki's trip.

Yet, at that time I was not fully aware of the importance of this cultural event for Georgia. During the trip, Akaki was accompanied by five reporters: editor and publisher of "Tema" newspaper Gigo Diasamidze, scholar and public figure Sosiko Merkviladze, editor of "Kolkhida" newspaper Mikheil Japaridze, reporter of the same newspaper Samson Dateshidze, Kutaisi reporter of "Sakhalkho Gazeti" Lado Bzvaneli. Each day they reported on Akaki's trip. Artist and photographer Kote Kavtaradze took 84 unique photos. The film director and director of photography Vasil Amashukeli made a film with scenes showing the entire trip.

Everything was organized on a large scale. One of the organizers was a simple baker, Ioba Isakadze.

People collected money, in villages Akaki was offered Georgian hospitality with marvelous meals. Everything is recorded - toasts pronounced while feasting, Akaki's speeches, people's addresses to the great poet, how people met him and how he was accompanied by horsemen...

There are numerous interesting records, e.g. the meeting between Akaki and the Jewish community of Oni. The Jews underlined that Akaki's poetry was mother's milk for them and spoke about the significance of Akaki's creative works. Unfortunately, this film was ruined, but the written records and texts have been retained.

In Chrebalo Akaki gave a lecture on archaeology and explained to peasants how important it was to donate antique objects to museums.

Newspaper articles, letters and archives confirm that the trip turned into a real celebration.

Apart from its artistic value, one of the merits of the film is that it has retained the images of Nikortsminda, Khoteni Church, and the Sairme mountain.

The costumes are simply amazing, as they provide significant information – and not only in the field of ethnography. For instance, the priests wear white frocks and the dresses and hats of the women are fascinating. In general, this is a very European society. Besides, peasants, aristocrats, students, postmen, doctors - all stand together...

The film uses all the cinematographic devices, lines and forms that were developed later into the language of cinema and used in films of various trends.

When we started working on the project, we knew that "Akaki Tsereteli's Trip to Racha and Lechkhumi" had been restored. We started to search for the film. At that time I learnt that Kote Kavtaradze's album with 84 unique photos was preserved at the Museum of Literature.

As I am extremely curious, I asked at the museum: "Is there any film by the way?" They answered there was some film... So we discovered the original (Maybe someone knew about its existence, but for me it was a discovery). The film is dated 1912. It was kept in a rusty box (the conditions in the repository were terrible, water was leaking from the roof... It was strange how the employees could bear it, to say nothing of the film). The film was in a terrible state, there were oil spots all over it.

So we went to Georgian Film studio, as we knew they had a wonderful scanner – not even Moscow's Mosfilm had one like it. It seemed easy to recover the film, but then I was unaware of the difficulties that would follow. Had I known them, I would have abandoned the project altogether.

In that period Archil Gelovani was involved in the restoration of "Keto and Kote". For this purpose he had brought an Austrian restorer, the head of the Austrian company DIAMANT – Digital Restoration, Walter Plaschzug. So I asked Archil to arrange a meeting for us.

I met Mr. Plaschzug. We showed him two films: one was restored by Karlo Gogodze – negative and positive (transferred to "Svema" and "Shostka" films), and the other – the positive of the American film made in 1912. He advised to clean only the original, as the film was amazing and contained more information.

We started working. When we were playing the film, we suspected there was a 2-minute episode not included in Karlo Gogodze's version. There were some

prints showing the persons who accompanied Akaki. They were taking a stroll by the river.

Now the main thing was to edit the film anew, as Karlo Gogodze had made some mistakes in editing.

It was purely scientific research. Certainly, I did not interfere and let Nino Natroshvili and Marina Kereselidze do the job. As I mentioned above, information about the trip was published by all newspapers, including subsequent information about shooting. We had to study the entire text and identify who, what, where and when. It was very important to retain the artistic image and to make the materials comprehensible for everyone. Marina and Nino managed to do this with their hard and selfless work.

It was a problem to take the film from the museum to the studio, but we managed. The wonderful scanner was of no use, as modern films are narrower than old ones, the cogs did not fit into the perforation and they said the positive might be torn.

In parallel, we made a CD version. We had simply fallen in love with Kote Kavtaradze's photos (we already knew everyone in the photos). We went to Gogi Mikeladze and Nugzar Medzmariashvili (who worked on the design of the disk). This took a lot of time, but it was all in vain.

I was in despair. I wrote to all my acquaintances asking for help. I also wrote to the Austrian restorer. He said the film had to be scanned digitally and he would clean it afterwards. He said in Munich there was a copying factory, Ariflex (RRI Film & TV Services), that could make a transfer to digital carriers.

The next stage was the hardest. The film - a museum exhibit, a national treasure - had to be taken outside the country. Besides, the film was flammable, so it could not be sent by post. The Austrians advised me to ask someone to take it secretly, but I had no right to do that.

The delivery cost 2,000 USD, as the film was placed in a special container. We sent the film to Germany. They made a copy and sent the film to Austria for restoration. The process of sending and resending the film lasted for a year.

In this period ministers were appointed and dismissed at an incredible speed. I had to visit each minister and explain what was going on with regard to the film. It was horrible.

Finally, Walter wrote: "The film will be restored and cleaned [of course, he knew the film would not be shining. It would be old but clean]. I will give you a discount and I advise you to make not only a digital version, but also negative and positive that will last for 100 years. Of course, I could not reject this offer. But I needed additional money. Meanwhile there was a new minister of culture, Nika Rurua. I was not familiar with him yet.

We had no money. We could not bring the film back. There was no other way out but to see the new minister. I rushed into his office and said: "If you do not allocate money, I will burn myself alive".

Thank God, Mr. Rurua is a professional film director. So he was aware of the significance and artistic value of this film. He allocated the necessary amount, as he knew the film had to be returned by all means.

However, it was 2008, and war broke out between Russia and Georgia. Walter said he understood our situation and would do his best to restore the film. However, he could afford to work on the film only after working hours. Therefore, the cleaning process took six months.

Finally, the film arrived. Now the speed was to be transferred to 24 frames. We addressed Temo Tsaava. The exposition had to be done anew, because, as we transferred 19 minutes to 24 frames, it became 33 minutes. So a new problem arose: it was impossible to watch a film of such duration in silence.

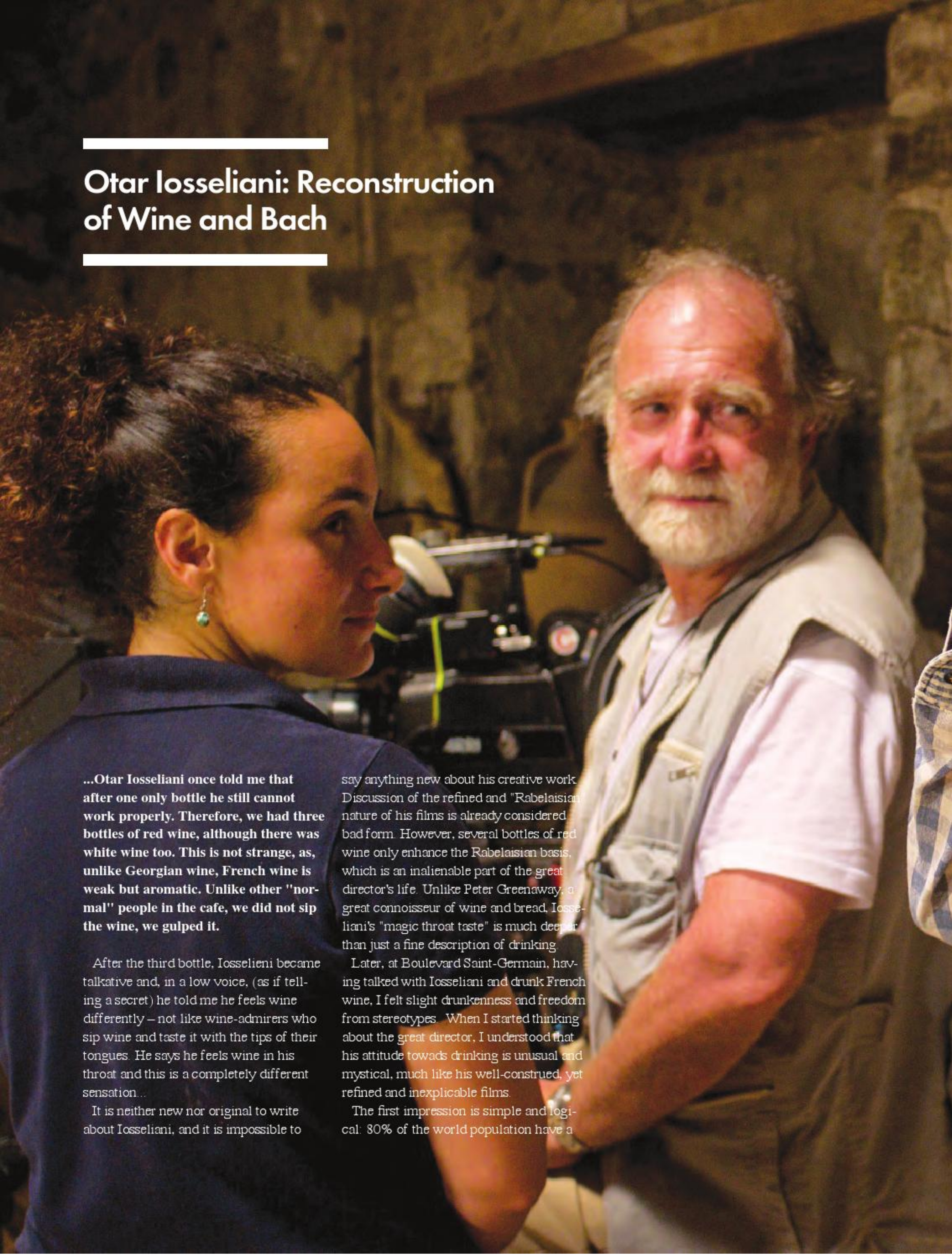
We commissioned music from a marvelous composer, Misha Mdinaradze (with whom I have worked many times). From historical sources we knew that during the premiere of the film at the "Radium" theater in Kutaisi, an orchestra was playing the songs based on Akaki's verses (Akaki had brought Varinka Tsereteli to watch the film together... how touching!). Misha

composed a popurri on old melodies, but the scores were modern and the music suited the film nicely.

In 2006 Guram Sharadze wrote a book about Akaki's trip, using film and photo archive materials, sourcebooks and works of scholars. He restored a complete picture of this historical event. However, children are not fond of reading, that's why we wanted them to see the disk. We wanted it to be multimedia and include games. We collected all the necessary materials. We used 60 songs from archive records. In this effort we were assisted by Anzor Erkomaishvili. Now the disk is available for everyone.

Every person sees his own experience in a work of art and distinguishes the idea that is central to him. I remember Nodar Lomouri's and Buba Kudava's reaction on seeing the film, both of them said in unison: "The entire nation is united by Akaki".

"Akaki Tsereteli's Trip to Racha and Lechkhumi" is as important for the history of Georgian cinema as "The Knight in the Panther's Skin" is for literature. The film contains a lot of information and is very democratic indeed. **fp**



Otar Iosseliani: Reconstruction of Wine and Bach

...Otar Iosseliani once told me that after one only bottle he still cannot work properly. Therefore, we had three bottles of red wine, although there was white wine too. This is not strange, as, unlike Georgian wine, French wine is weak but aromatic. Unlike other "normal" people in the cafe, we did not sip the wine, we gulped it.

After the third bottle, Iosselieni became talkative and, in a low voice, (as if telling a secret) he told me he feels wine differently – not like wine-admirers who sip wine and taste it with the tips of their tongues. He says he feels wine in his throat and this is a completely different sensation...

It is neither new nor original to write about Iosseliani, and it is impossible to say anything new about his creative work. Discussion of the refined and "Rabelaisian" nature of his films is already considered bad form. However, several bottles of red wine only enhance the Rabelaisian basis, which is an inalienable part of the great director's life. Unlike Peter Greenaway, a great connoisseur of wine and bread, Iosseliani's "magic throat taste" is much deeper than just a fine description of drinking.

Later, at Boulevard Saint-Germain, having talked with Iosseliani and drunk French wine, I felt slight drunkenness and freedom from stereotypes. When I started thinking about the great director, I understood that his attitude towads drinking is unusual and mystical, much like his well-construed, yet refined and inexplicable films.

The first impression is simple and logical: 80% of the world population have a

Photo: Gael Sicot

desire to escape from reality with the help of alcohol. However, there are drinkers who do not escape from reality, but find another reality, more so if we mean "creative drinkers". Such legality and freedom in drinking may cause certain envy of the ascetics, especially if they are disguised as honest and hard-working.

The philosophy of Omar Khayyam – a desire for drunkenness i.e. passage to sublime reality, in the case of Iosselieni does not mean escape from reality or capitulation. This is a unique and timely freedom of rebellious and creative energy.

However, this is not new. Many loser drunkards create the myth that drinking is a social protest, a sign of non-conformism. Yet Iosseliani does not need any deception or philosophic mimicry, nor is he a loser. He has been fully able all his life to choose any other form of protest or non-conformism, the more so that media and French critics favor him.

Otar Iosseliani creates a myth of drunkenness, he manages to be drunk and sober at the same time. His invented role – in which he is constantly holding a bottle of wine – does not mean drunkenness, but absolute sobriety. This is a paradox, even though there are numerous examples of talented people discovering what is invisible for others. For this, they pay a price – madness, drunkenness, silence, invisible suffering.

According to psychoanalysts, a drunkard is a person who has a deficit of positive emotions and can find perfection only in drinking. This is a complete erotic-emotional feeling, associated with alcohol which is "mother's milk" for them. All the rest is inexplicable sadness that one has to escape from, and there is only one way out – drinking. Thus, this is a vicious cycle. Such psychological explanation does not apply in Iosseliani's case, as he does not view wine as a form of escape. He drinks in order to see things more soberly.

Otar Iosseliani is not a permanently drunk Epicurean, but a constantly sober Hamlet. He is a sober drunkard, for whom a choice between drunkenness and sobriety is a constant game. He can feel both. In other words, he does not fall into the dangerous "abyss" of drunkenness (like Nicholas Cage's character in Michael Figgis' "Leaving Las Vegas"). At the same time, he cannot bear the permanent strain of sobriety (like Lino Ventura - killer in a French film "The Ruffian")...

Thus, the uniqueness of Otar Iosseliani, like his elusiveness, makes him an artist beyond any classification. His unusual wisdom (incidentally, Soviet and Russian critics called him "the wise Georgian") is his ability to escape and free himself any time. But this is not an act of irresponsible hedonism. He does not escape from freedom, he escapes to achieve freedom. Thus, his escape is a kind of deconstruction, or even a methodology of "building" new reality, i.e. new films.

The second specific feature is Iosseliani's "homelessness". This is not rare among artists. In this respect, he is not original. Despite luxury and comfort, fatal and irrational escape is sometimes necessary - suffice it to remember Da Vinci, Tolstoy, Hemingway or Tennessee Williams. In this regard, Iosseliani has been "lucky": he is a citizen of four countries (!!!) and yet he is homeless. He has no home in Tbilisi or Moscow, nor in Berlin (which is so comfortable for him), nor even in Paris where he has lived for nearly 30 years and switched homes six times. His secret ability is not to stay anywhere for long and return "home" unnoticed.

Discussing Iosseliani's latest films, director Valeriy Todorovskiy said: "This is no longer music, it is just notes". He was referring to the extreme constructivism so characteristic of Iosseliani's films. These films have retained only the bones, the skeleton, devoid of tissues and blood vessels, to say nothing of any aesthetic perfumery. However, the system of notes requires good reading, as without them both a beginner and a skilled musician play equally badly. But "the notes construction" in Iosseliani's films is not an end in itself or a functional peculiarity, but a wonderful means of self-expression, like in Bach's partitas.

Apart from its cosmic dimension, the secret of Bach's music is in the universal knowledge of form, counterpoint. Therefore, Bach's music creates a concrete mood which exists beyond time. His art of composing is vivid, his form is perfect and the sensation is magic.

Like Bach, who managed to merge architectural form and amazing "sensible feelings", Iosseliani succeeded in making his films devoid of any unnecessary emotions, thus he managed to retain the perfection of form. Iosseliani is often criticized for making films that lack empathy, but these critics forget that distance often yields space for emotional evaluation. The more restrained the position of the director, the more acute his attitude to reality.

If an artist is so talented that, like Bach, he can place the universe simultaneously in rational and emotional dimensions, or be both drunk and precise (remember: he is a mathematician!), draw reality anatomically, but retain mysticism and spirit, then it should be taken for granted that the system of notes is universal indeed. However, sensibility often does not help an artist to define what is more important - to remain in the frames of finite rationalism or, like Anna Magnani, express emotion as painfully as an open wound.

Certainly, it is impossible to argue that a bottle (or several bottles) of red wine helps Iosseliani to see something invisible, without which art would resemble a system of notes. However, "In Vino Veritas" is not only a favorite proverb of the Romans, but the title of Iosseliani's latest film.

The vain fuss of the characters of this film creates the impression that the director long ago lost his faith in people. The children who build houses with wooden bricks are far more serious than the adults leading a life of destructive absurdity. Some of them die in their sleep without ever waking up. Only people with chronic sleeplessness can grasp this, much as only those who "suffer" from chronic sobriety can easily identify drunkards.

Otar Iosseliani could have laughed at the new burgeois society like Bunuel and made the entire Western (and now Eastern European) consumer society an object of poetic satire like Fellini did. However,

Photo: Niko Tarielashvili

But "the notes construction" in Iosseliani's films is not an end in itself or a functional peculiarity, **but a wonderful means of self-expression, like in Bach's partitas**

he is prevented from doing this and the factors that hold him back are: good taste, a bit of laziness and a bottle of wine...because "In Vino Veritas"; and, what is more important, recently he has been creating a strange, calculated, "notes system" films. Like entomologist, he observes the insect-like fuss of people.

Mr. Todorovskiy is probably right: Ioseliani, enchanted by music, cannot hear music. He only sees and reads the notes. But in order to see the horrors of the world (blood, corpses, terrorists, kleptocracy, the final destruction of Europe) with his X-ray vision, he has two approaches: the way of Kafka's characters or that of Hamlet. Yet, he retains a third way – drinking wine. In order to find the truth, he continues to make films despite his old age. "Art is given to us to save us from death caused by truth!" warns Nietzsche.

Lastly, mention should be made of one more interesting cinematographic space occupied by Ioseliani – a friend of tramps. This is a little space, a borderline zone between feature and documentary films.

If we draw a line between feature and documentary, we find that documentary cinema is a story about the world and other people, whereas feature cinema is the story of one's inner self i.e. our projection towards the outside world. By the way, there were times when Ioseliani managed both. Here one might remember on the one hand "Cast Iron" and "April", and on the other hand, the black-and-white film "Pastoral" which is as perfect as music.

This is a real masterpiece, where music and not the notes play the leading part.

>> Levan Varazi

The Rebel
Interview with Merab Ninidze

For 20 years already he has been living abroad. He has not acted on a Georgian stage since 2004. Tengiz Abuladze's "Repentance" in 1983 made him extremely popular. He was recognized as his character Tornike Aravidze in the entire Soviet or post-Soviet space. This is probably why Merab Ninidze always performs the role of a rebel, an ordinary earthly man who confronts great injustice. Even when the film "Nowhere in Africa" won the Oscar, Ninidze remained faithful to Europe and was not attracted by the roles that would make him obedient and stereotypical. This is what happened to all actors who moved to Hollywood from the former Soviet space, e.g. Uchaneishvili and Mashkov. The Georgian audience is not familiar with Ninidze's more recent work, as our movie theaters rarely show German films. That is why we discussed the actor's new projects as we met on the set of Rezo Gigineishvili's film "Love Ballad". Our conversation started with this very film.

fp Russian forums are saying that your new project "Love Ballad" will be more nostalgia about Russian-Georgian relations and that the film's rental will fail.

I cannot call it nostalgia, but I understand what they mean. I think Gigineishvili's film is about people and personal relations and not political realities. I hope the reader will understand what I mean, so I will underline that geographically Russia and Georgia have always been neighbors. What is going on between these countries now is a dispute between neighbors. In my opinion, the seven short stories in the film are so human that political discussions are out of place. "Love Ballad" is a love story, a story of people who try to find solutions to their problems. I cannot predict whether the film will sell or not... In my opinion, cinema and theater aim to show us in an artistic way that we need one another. This is the aim of Gigineishvili's film too.

fp By the end of this year, the audience will see Dennis Gansel's film "In the Year of the Dog", dedicated to the Russian intelligence service. What is your role in this film?

The film is anti-Russian and Dennis Gansel shows Russian corruption quite openly. The script is quite scathing and remainds me of Alan Parker's "Midnight Exspress". "In the Year of the Dog" shows how a system can destroy a person and discredit and terrorize him with an "invented" criminal case, which may seal one's life and career forever. My role in the film is that of a person who helps a German journalist opposing Russian intelligence service to leave prison. To tell the truth, I haven't seen the film yet, as the shooting ended in February and is currently in post-production.

fp You took part in the new film "Camera Killer" which is a psychological thriller often compared to Haneke's films. There are many dramatic roles and psychological dramas in your career. Do you think "Repentance" has determined your future roles and characters?

My role in Robert-Adrian Pejo's film "Camera Killer" was hard to perform, especially from the psychological standpoint. The director was aiming to achieve maximum effect with minimal artistic means. I as an actor did not have the opportunity to reveal myself fully. So I don't think this has been one of the best roles for me. Just for comparison, recently I played in Dito Tsintsadze's film. The role was unusual for me, so it was kind of a risk. The director took a risk too and found something interesting about me. However, I won't tell you more; let the audience speak about the result when the film is screened. Recently I have noticed that I frequently choose (or directors give me) character roles. It is like bearing one's cross - like Tornike Aravidze - one performs the role of a rebel who at the same time is oppressed by the period he lives in. I started my career by performing Tornike Aravidze, and this has brought many positive results. However, my career also includes comic roles that are still unknown to the Georgian audience.

fp In some of your interviews one can feel nostalgia for the times when represen-

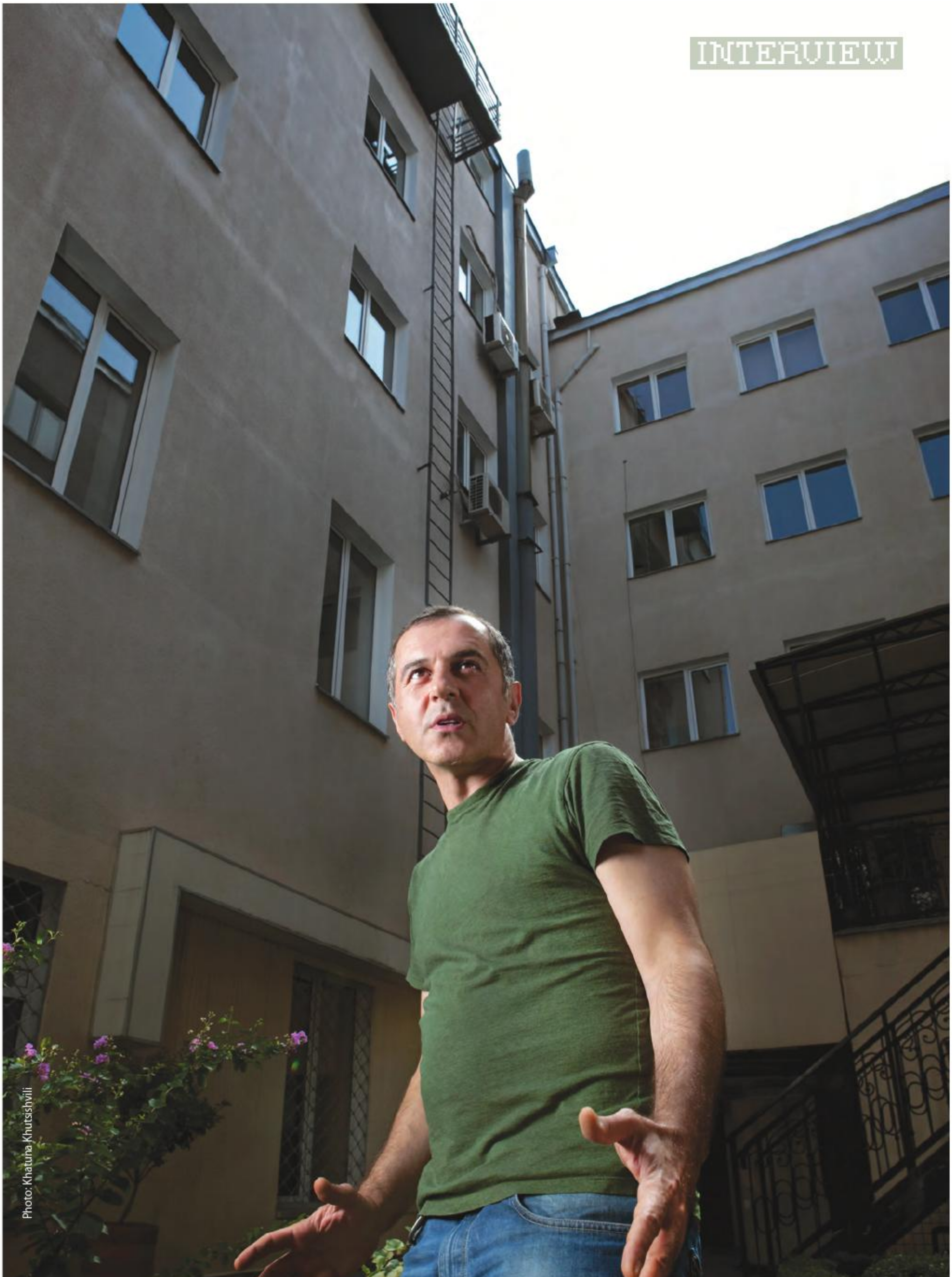


Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

tatives of different nationalities lived in a friendly community. You once said: "In the past it was easier to be a Georgian". What did you mean?

If I'm not mistaken, I said it in an interview during the Venice Festival. I was presenting a Russian film in which I had played. It was Aleksandr German Jr's film "Paper Soldier". This does not mean I preached pro-Russian ideas. Simply living in the Soviet Union resembled living in a neighborhood where Georgians, Russians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis and Kurds had extremely warm and friendly relationships. In Venice I said it absolutely earnestly, especially taking into account that I, a Georgian actor, was representing a Russian film and I had a kind of dual feeling then. It was hard to be member of the Russian delegation after the Russian-Georgian war. But we, people of art, are taught that art goes beyond all national borders... Then, at the Festival, Aleksandr German Jr told me: "We've done a good job, we should be an example for others to follow"... As you know, the film is based on Georgian motives. Initially they were thought to be Jewish motives, but, as I was the main actor, German decided to adjust the subject line to me. "Paper Soldier" shows how difficult it is for Georgians to live in Russia, much as it was difficult for Jews to live in Nazi Germany.

fp After the success of the Oscar-winning film "Nowhere in Africa" everyone thought a new stage would start in your life and career – the epoch of Hollywood. However, these expectations were not met.

I had many offers. I still go to castings all around the world, but, due to objective reasons, I often refuse or postpone things... Besides, I think I was not born to live in Hollywood and play typical criminals or explicitly positive characters. In Europe I always accept offers if the roles are interesting. I speak several languages, so I can always take a part in an interesting project... Thus, I don't think I lead a boring life, or that I am less productive than I would be in Hollywood.

>> Giorgi Kalatozishvili

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

special FOCUS

Photo: Nikoloz Mdivani

A Film Window Facing Europe

Marion Doring: "It is quite possible for the awards ceremony of the European Film Academy to be held in Tbilisi"

When the Awards Ceremony of the European Film Academy was held in Christmas-decorated Tallinn, Estonia, to tell the truth, I was a bit envious. The European Film Academy bravely entered the post-Soviet space for the first time. Yet, it entered a country not so rich in cinematographic traditions... This means that international, social and political factors are far more important that cinematographic and cultural context.

Marion Doring, famous German producer, director and member of the European Film Academy, was invited by the Georgian National Film Center to attend the Batumi International Art-House Film Festival (BIAFF). She tried to moderate our skepticism and assured us that the European Film Academy is not far from us and, in the nearest future, Georgia may have the honor of hosting the European Film Academy Awards ceremony (held every December). In my opinion, the reader will be interested in getting acquainted with Marion Doring's viewpoints about the trends in contemporary Western cinema and the principles of the European Film Academy.

fp How would you evaluate the activities of the European Film Academy in the historical perspective? Why was it important to establish the Film Academy?

Years later, one can make some assessments. In 1989 great European film directors – Jean Luc Godard, Ingmar Bergman, Bernardo Bertolucci, Istvan Szabo and others – gathered in a hotel in Berlin and decided to establish European Film Academy. Obviously, this was connected with the political events of that period. The wall of Berlin had fallen, ideological barriers had disappeared and the border between Eastern and Western Europe had been removed. Hence, further development of European cinema and the necessity to seek new directions became issues on the agenda.

fp Was this a kind of alternative against Hollywood films? More precisely, was the formation of the European Film Academy motivated by an instinct of self-preservation?

Certainly this was one of the reasons. When a film academy with 40 famous directors and about 2,500 members tries to support European cinema, this is completely natural. The opposition between Hollywood and European cinema meant concrete actions beyond mythology: encouragement of films by different authors belonging to diverse culture and traditions, discovery of new directors, creation of a common European film space etc.

fp Do major film-producing countries influence minor ones, i.e. is there a threat that this influence will go beyond the frames of cinema and gain political significance?

About one third of films are submitted to the European Film Academy by major countries of the West (France, Germany, UK, Spain, Italy...). The remaining two thirds are represented by smaller countries and Eastern Europe. Thus, there is no dominance or political influence. Great attention is focused on retaining this balance. We cooperate not only with major film festivals, but also with minor and comparatively less popular ones. This is the reason why we are in Batumi. We are willing to know about the festival and learn new things. Above all, it is our aim to get acquainted with contemporary Georgian films, meet Georgian filmmakers and the young generation of directors.

There are major and popular festivals – Cannes, Venice, Berlin, San Sebastian. In parallel, there are numerous small festivals with less influence. It is quite possible that the European Film Academy leaves the latter festivals without attention...

This is a permanent threat, but it is important for us to cooperate with minor festivals where we may discover unknown pearls. For instance, we are here in Batumi. We have successfully cooperated with the Tbilisi International Film Festival, too, and met many famous or yet unknown filmmakers. This time we met the Minister of Culture of Achara, who supports BIAFF. He told us many new and interesting things.

fp Can you name any Georgian films that have won European Film Academy awards?

Certainly, I remember them well. For instance, Nino Kirtadze's documentary film, or Dito Tsintsadze's "Fear of Shooting". Films by Nana Jorjadze and Gela Babluani have also been nominated.

fp In 2010 European Film Academy Awards Ceremony was held in Tallinn. Is there an opportunity to hold this ceremony in other post-Soviet countries like Ukraine, Georgia or Moldova?

The ceremony in Tallinn is wonderful proof that this may take place...

However, there is one significant nuance. The above-mentioned countries are not EU members and this may hamper organization of the ceremony in these countries.

We do not attach importance either to the size of a country or its EU membership. The vision of the European Film Academy is broader and is not subject to geographical or political borders. This is the key principle. When the awards ceremony was held in Tallinn last winter, the participants were hosted by families. Contacts with Tallinn's citizens were very emotional. It was important to get to know their culture and ways of life. Taking into account Georgian hospitality and traditions, it is quite possible that the awards ceremony will be held in Tbilisi.

fp How does European Film Awards Commission evaluate films? Are its principles different from those of the Oscar selection commission?

Initially, national commissions presented films. However, this seems subjective. Currently we work based on a completely different principle. The films are selected by an international jury based on artistic criteria. Meeting the deadlines is extremely important. A film has to be completed by the first of July and screened at some European festival.

fp Are the members of the European Film Commission selected annually or for a certain fixed period?

The Commission is annual and its members are selected based on certain principles. In any case, this is a living process and the Commission tries to be not only an evaluator but also a participant. This is of utmost importance.

fp Do you think media should focus more on the coverage of the "European Oscars"? The awards ceremony could be broadcasted in more countries. There is live broadcasting of the American Oscars each year, while the European Academy Awards ceremony is not broadcast by any of the Georgian TV channels.

This is not only our problem. In order for the ceremony to be broadcast by your channels, the Public Broadcaster and the Georgian National Film Center should address European Film Academy and pay for broadcasting and translation. This is a simple but scrupulous process. It is important to get acquainted with European films, especially taking into account the tough competition with Hollywood.

fp What are the prospects of European Film Academy and where will the next awards ceremony be held?

On December 3, 2011 the ceremony will be held in Berlin. In 2012 it will be held in Malta. Thus, the Academy is involved actively in the preparatory process.

fp As for the future, what is needed in order to retain and develop European cinema in conditions of the financial crisis?

This is hard and complicated. To put it shortly, the attitude toward cinema should be changed. We should do our best to retain and encourage European films, to promote films from minor Eastern European countries and seek ways of financing short, documentary and author's films.

>> Davit Bukhrikidze

Georgi Djulgerov: "The Film Festival is Therapy against Hollywood Metastases"

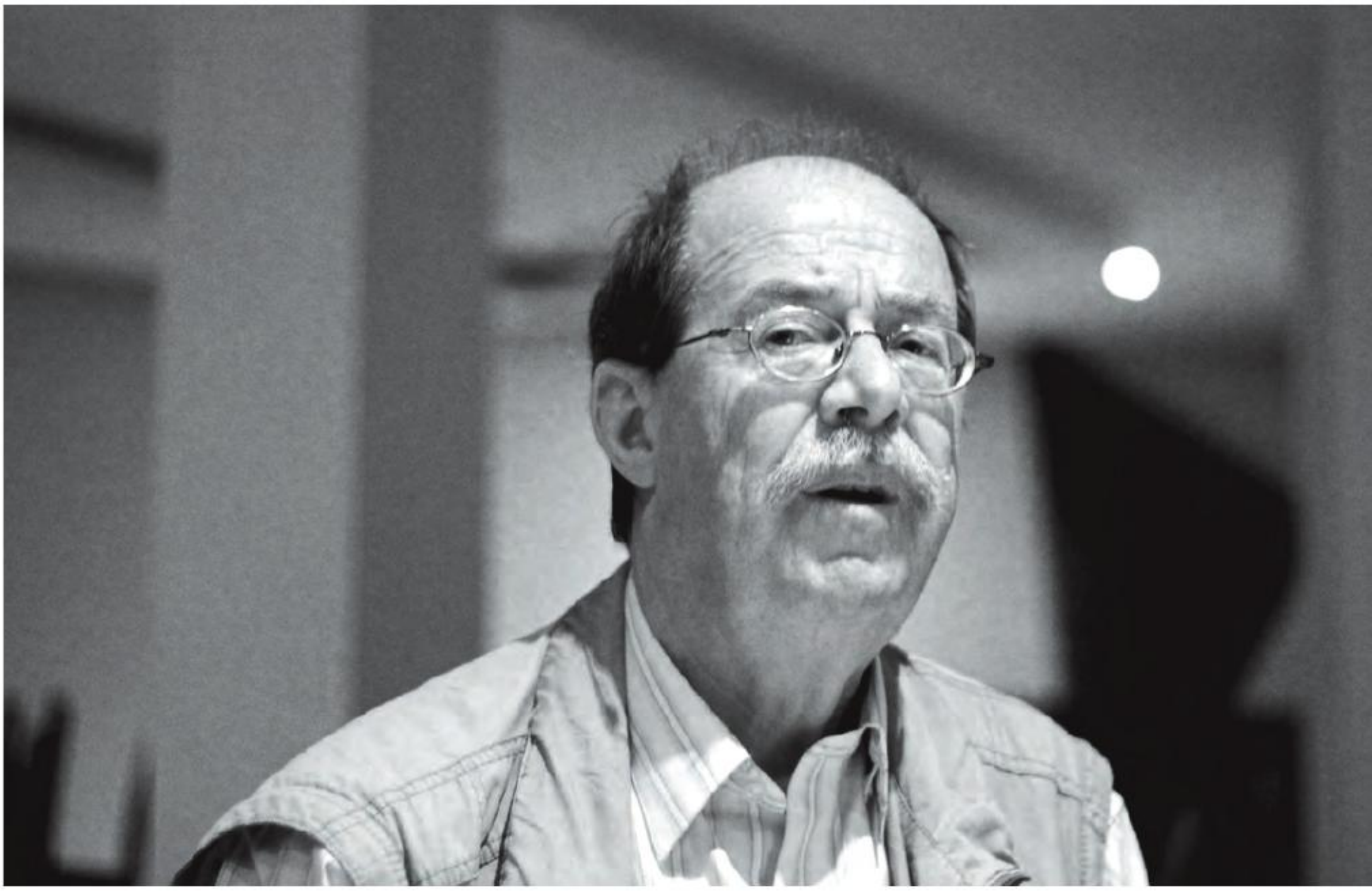


Photo: Nikoloz Mdivani

Bulgarian film director Georgi Djulgerov - head of the Jury of the Feature Films Section of The Sixth Batumian International Art-House Film Festival (BIAFF) – is a bit Georgian: he studied at VGIK in Moscow and is well-aware of Georgian films. His favorites are films by Aleksandre Rekhviashvili, Irakli Kvirikadze, Otar Iosseliani and Dito Tsintsadze. He thinks that the BIAFF will turn into a significant cultural event in the Caucasus if it takes the right approach and receives adequate financing. We started this interview by discussing the Batumi festival.

fp Don't you think the word "Art-House" in the title of Batumi film festival is a bit pretentious?

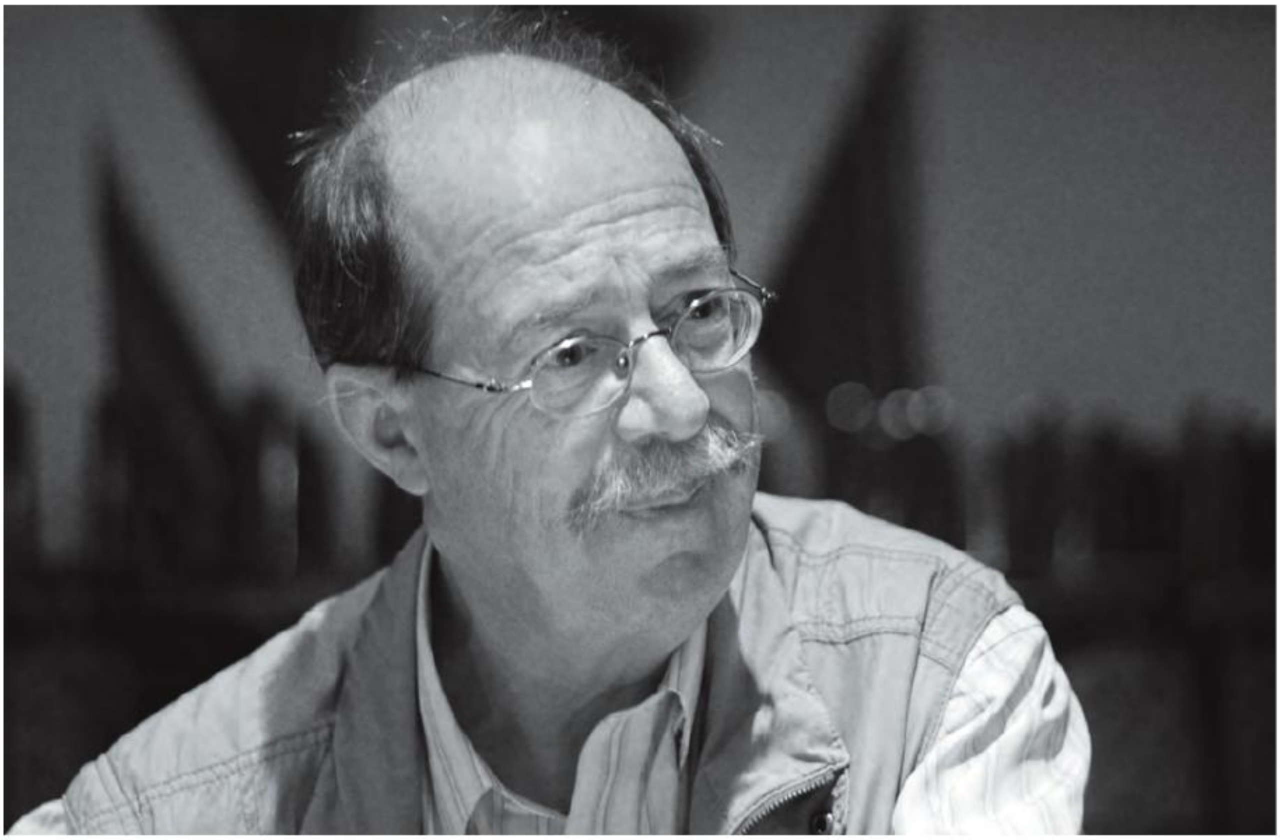
The words "Art-House" are significant semantically. In Batumi we saw many interesting films that run counter to the dominant and destructive mainstream. The famous director Otar Iosseliani talked about this on the opening day.

fp However, other festivals also claim to discover author's films.

Well, this is the only way to save film-making. This is why the BIAFF is very important, although it is very new. There are mistakes and organizational problems at numerous major festivals. The main thing is to create the proper atmosphere: interesting films, interested audience, meetings and discussions.

fp How would you evaluate the audience of the BIAFF?

The halls were usually full, the reaction of the audience was immediate and lively. It does not matter what they say later. Besides, cinema has its own alphabet. It



is an objective of every festival to teach this alphabet to the spectators. This is an educational function. In this case I am speaking as the head of the Feature Films Jury, as I have not seen the documentary or short films.

fp Should the BIAFF retain this chamber atmosphere and remain a festival of European films, or is it better to expand its geographical borders?

It is highly desirable in future, like during this year's festival, for the audience to be able to watch east Asian, Iranian and Turkish films. To tell the truth, I was more charmed by the idea of "Golchereh" by Iranian director Vahid Musayan than the direction side. I liked "Gypsy" by Czech director Martin Sulik; it is a very clever and socially sharp film, and the construction of "Hamlet" is cleverly adjusted. It is a contemporary social drama about Gypsy reality. To a certain degree, the film is surrealistic and its ending is unexpected – an ostrich appears in the asphalted street. We even joked that Fortinbras appeared in the ending. I also liked "Blue Code", a well-directed, slightly ironic and rather severe film. Good direction and photography are evident in this film. Ursula Antoniak is a very good director and her first film was awarded Grand Prix in Batumi last year. Pascal Rabate's "Holidays by the Sea" was a discovery and reminded me of the ironic and poetic attitude of Jacques Tati.

fp Many significant changes took place in the post-Soviet and Eastern European films of the 90s. Do you think "time is out of joint"?

Interesting comparison! Certainly, time was out of joint in cinema after the fall of Berlin wall and the disintegration of the Soviet Union... with the exception of Hungarian cinema. The drastic changes were dramatic for Polish, Czech and Bulgarian films. Georgia also suffered from complicated political and social events. And yet, the main reason for time being out of joint is the loss of the cultural link among generations. This is not only due to political or financial reasons, there are internal existential reasons related to the social and psychological transformation of Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet States. In normal situation, the younger generation replaces the older one without ceasing contacts with the past, thus, the past, the present and the future are interlinked. However, this was not the case in Eastern Europe and post-Soviet countries.

fp Then how would you explain the phenomenon of Romanian cinema? They also passed through destruction and generation gap, but currently their cinema is undergoing a renaissance.

This seems like a dialectic law – negation of negation. After the destruction of walls and borders, Romania was lucky enough to have a clever minister of culture who also had good taste. This enabled young filmmakers to obtain financing and create whatever films they wanted. Later, as a result of natural selection, the talented ones were saved, e.g. Cristi Puiu with his famous dramatic absurd "The Death of Mr. Lazarescu", Florian Serban with his social commentary "If I Want to Whistle, I Whistle", and, lastly, Cristian Mungiu, who was awarded the main prize in Cannes.

fp As for your native Bulgarian cinema...

Several years ago in Bulgaria a law on

charity and financing was adopted, and this enlivened the situation. Young film-makers try to achieve things with more promotion and less self-sacrifice. But this is natural in the given reality. Interesting films are made by Kamen Kalev, whose film was screened in Cannes last year. A wonderful poetic film by Yadviga Trifonova "A Letter to America" should also be mentioned. Ivan Cherkelov's "Christmas Tree Upside Down" was awarded in Karlovy-Vary and San-Sebastian. An annual festival is held in Sofia and it is a member of the Association of European Festivals. What is most important is that there is still an audience interested in art-house films.

fp In the 60s you studied at VGIK and you are to a certain extent acquainted with Georgian cinema...

Yes, I studied together with Vakhtang Mikeladze, Irakli Kvirikadze, Aleksandre Rekhviashvili... Otar Iosseliani often came too. At that time he was shooting short films. Giorgi Danelia's dramatic comedies always impressed me, to say nothing of the films by Tengiz Abuladze and Rezo Chkheidze. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union I was for some time unaware of the processes in Georgian cinema, but I knew that film-production had completely stopped due to destruction and crisis, same as everywhere in the post-Soviet space. About 15 years ago I came to Batumi and "tasted" the crisis myself. With time, things changed. However, I remember some interesting films of the 90s: Giorgi Khaindrava's "Cemetery of Dreams" and, a bit later, Nana Jorjadze's "27 Lost Kisses". Film traditions are so strong in Georgia that it would be impossible to destroy everything in a short while. Last year in Wiesbaden I watched Temur Butikashvili's wonderful social tragicomedy, I also appreciate Giorgi Ovashvili's "The Other bank". This year Keti Machavariani's "Salt White" was screened in Karlovy Vary. I saw the film for the first time on the closing day of BIAFF.

fp You are saying nothing about your own films. One of your most famous films "Lady Zee" was nominated by European Film Academy in 2007...

Yes, the film had certain success. Besides, it got the main prize at the Sarajevo International Film Festival. I was awarded the "Silver Bear" in Berlin for the film "Camp" which I made in the 90s. Currently I am working on the script of a new film.

fp How do you evaluate constant conflict between Art-House films and Hollywood? Is it a matter of dialectics too?

Frankly speaking, the struggle against Hollywood is vain. This is cancer cannot be defeated with medicine. Festival films play the role of chemical therapy, but neither festivals nor author's films can defeat Hollywood. On the other hand, Hollywood is unable to destroy art-house. In this regard, the future of BIAFF is interesting and I wish it success and further development! I also wish success to the "Prometheus" Tbilisi International Film Festival, in which I have participated several times.

>> Davit Bukhrikidze

Photo: Nikoloz Mdivani

A Lot of Prose, a Little Politics and a "Sea Horse" for Good Measure

Interview with Iranian Director Dariush Mehrjui

The 6th Batumi International Art-House Film Festival (BIAFF) in was attended by a number of famous directors. For instance: Georgia's Otar Iosseliani, so aware of the labyrinths of European cinema and constantly dissatisfied with the present; Dariush Mehrjui, famous in Iran and elsewhere, yet unknown to Georgia. The latter is considered a key figure in the "new wave" of Iranian cinema. His films precede those of Abbas Kiarostami and Mohsen Mahmalbaf. Mehrjui was awarded golden "Sea Horse" for his contribution to the cinematographic art.

Dariush Mehrjui, member of the jury of the feature films section, seemed a bit exhausted and concerned. The likely reason was the arrest of six documentary directors in Tehran at the same time as the BIAFF. These directors were accused for attempting to sell what was described as an "anti-Iranian" film to the BBC. The famous director mentioned this fact in the interview.

Dariush Mehrjui was born in Tehran. In the 1960s he "miraculously" (so he says) reached America where he studied film direction at the University of California. In 1970 his first full-length film, "The Cow", was secretly taken to the Venice festival and screened without subtitles and translation. This caused a sensation and brought fame to the director. His second film, "Circle", was no less scandalous. Mehrjui shot it over five years. In 1978 the film was awarded the FIPRESCI special prize of film critics in Berlin.

In the 1980s Mehrjui lived in Paris. Then he returned to Iran, where he had fewer problems with the authorities than other directors. He is the author of about 20 feature, documentary and short films.

The retrospective in Batumi screened two of his films – "Leila" and "Pear Tree".

fp Mr. Mehrjui, thank you for coming to Batumi and for your interesting films. Above all, I would like to ask about "Leila". Georgian audience has now seen it for the first time. What has changed with time? You made the film in 1998. At that time it caused sensation in Iran and abroad...

I don't like to watch my films anew, because I have a strong desire to make corrections, and this is an endless process. I would change nothing. This is a family or, more exactly, psychological drama. The film lives and breathes naturally. I think it still makes a realistic and socially important impression.

fp The issues raised in the film - women's rights, family and social violence - are they still important in Iran?

The story of the film, family violence and moral problems, bigamy and related psychological issues are still topical. The government still urges women to give birth to children from different husbands and encourages men to marry different women. This is a result of propaganda policy and religious influence, which is still strong.

fp Unfortunately, we were unable to see your famous film "Circle" at the festival. Initially the film fell victim to censorship. Such cases were frequent and they still occur. Last year the famous director Jafar Panahi was sentenced to house arrest; recently six documentary directors have been arrested. How strong is the censorship and what problems does it create for film directors?

I thought the organizers of the festival would be interested in other, more popular films. I wanted to bring four of my films to the festival, but I failed to. For example "Santuri" (2007) is an incomplete version and I did not want to show it at the festival. "The Cow" was made nearly 40 years ago. Therefore, I decided to bring "Leila" and the poetic film "Pear Tree"... As for Jafar Panahi, I think his house arrest is not so serious. During this house arrest he made a film and took it to the Cannes festival. This does not mean that the director is prevented from making films, even though this was part of the court's sentence.

fp What is the fate of the documentary directors?

The tense political situation has not been moderated even after the [2009] elections. Certainly, any kind of arrest hampers the development of cinema. Young and engaged directors tried to make a documentary about [President Mahmud] Ahmadinejad, his coming to power, etc. To my knowledge, six directors have been arrested as they wanted to sell the film to BBC and make profit.

fp Do you come across similar problems while shooting?

In the past, the situation was much harder for film directors. For example, in the 1970s, when "Circle" was released, there were problems with regard to distribution, despite the fact that the film was popular and screened at festivals. Several years earlier the minister of culture prohibited sales and distribution of "Santuri", saying the film was harmful. My films were confiscated. However, this time they did not hamper my shootings. In 2010 I finished "Tehran, Tehran" and it was seen by a large number of spectators. Thus, directors are able to work and make films despite problems.

fp Please tell us about Iranian directors: for us films by Abbas Kiarostami and Mohsen Mahmalbaf are symbols of Iranian cinema. Is there any union or a platform that unites the directors of your generation?

Prior to the Iranian revolution we used to be together very often. With time, each of us found his way in cinema. Initially there was no censorship – we simply made films about life, happiness, poverty... Later, after the revolution, the new government created ideological and social problems. So we had to say things allegorically, using the language of fables. The traditions of Iranian cinema and poetry have influenced the directors of our generation to a great extant.

fp What can you say about current situation? What is the influence of television, internet, entertainment industry etc. on cinema? Is there any cultural "clash" between the new epoch and the poetic Iranian cinema?

We are in a strange situation nowadays. Due to seclusion and censorship, the country faces numerous problems. The internet is often blocked, while youngsters need entertainment and escape from this reality to other countries. Besides, they have become deceitful and cynical, and they try to find easy ways of self-fulfillment...

fp What are the creative problems of young Iranian directors?

The choice is whether to stay and tackle problems, or to flee from them. Some famous directors work actively, e.g. Mohman Kobad, the above-mentioned Jafar Panahi or Vahid Mousaian (whose film "Golchehreh" was awarded Grand Prix of BIAFF). They are totally different, but they have problems in common. For example, Mousaian shot his film in Afghanistan, because in Iran he was not allowed to shoot.

fp How would you evaluate BIAFF, do you plan to visit Georgia again?

I would like to thank the organizers of BIAFF for the invitation and for the prize given to me on the closing day... Recently I finished a film called "Beneath the Sky", and I will gladly present it to a Georgian audience next year. The new film was awarded a prize for Best Direction at the International Film Festival in Tehran this year. It is invited to several other international festivals... So see you in Batumi!

>> Davit Bukhrikidze

Photo: Nikoloz Mdivani

Interview with Andrzej Wajda

A nation's conscience, history and progress depend on people whose creative work, way of life and moral criteria coincide with historical experience. The history of Poland is the history of a struggle for freedom. Probably no other country has struggled as much for independence as Poland. In the periods of historical cataclysms, Polish intellectuals played an important role in correct political decision-making. One such intellectual is Andrzej Wajda – prominent Polish filmmaker, public figure, and a true conscience of the nation.

No other Polish film director has reflected the spirit of Poland, its present, and the role of a person in the history of the country as Wajda. In the "Solidarity" era Wajda supported a leading political group and even agreed to be member of the Sejm (legislature), because he considered this a necessary step in that period. He remained in the Sejm while his team made the decisions.

World War II, the failed Warsaw Uprising and the Communist regime – Wajda has suffered all this and reflected it in his films.

One of the latest films by Andrzej Wajda is dedicated to the Katyn tragedy (slaughter of thousands of Polish soldiers in Russia in 1940). This tragedy was most painful for him, as his father fell victim to the massacre. It took him a long time to create the film. When it was shown in Moscow, Andrzej Wajda said: "Now the world knows the truth about the Katyn tragedy. Time has come to turn a new page in relations with Russia". Only a great artist can behave this way. Wajda is a living, "young" classic.

In 2006 – 2007, I had the good fortune to be taught by the great director and attend shootings of his feature film "Katyn". The entire crew was amazed at the 83-year-old Wajda. Despite his age, he was full of energy. At his lectures he discussed diverse versions of stories and turned to different fields of art for examples. I am sure his classes have been extremely useful and important for all the students.

My friend Pawel Ferdek and I asked the great director to answer some questions.

fp Why is Polish cinema important for you?

The main thing is the language, without which no society will develop. Present reality is unimaginable without Munk, Kavalerovic, Kutz, Konvitski, Marchevsky and my films. These directors and their films brought up the society and showed who we are. They brought us to "Solidarity". We keep thinking that films made by Polish directors should be in the Polish language and Polish actors should participate in them. However, a film in the Polish language is hard to sell worldwide.

fp Please tell us about your school - the Andrzej Wajda Master school of film directing. How important is the experience gained at school for a creative person?

It is difficult to explain. Our school has existed for 11 years, so we are making the first steps. We use the experience gained in our old schools. Probably in every director's life there is a period when school is finished and independent life starts. A director is alone versus the audience. The first film is the hardest...

It is good when a school is a meeting place for people with diverse cultural backgrounds. A gathering of artists leads to special closeness.

I remember my student years. I was a friend of Tarkovsky, Konchalovsky, Grisha Chukhray. I was familiar with Mikhail Romm and Gerasimov. I was amazed, because it was more difficult for them to make films than for us...

I was a friend of Volker Schlondorff, too. By the way, I was supposed to make "The Tin Drum"; the author, Gunter Grass wished so. But I would have been unable to create a film like Schlondorff's...

In short, a meeting of artistic people is always beneficial not only for filmmaking but also for the world, peace, mutual understanding... If people understand one another, conflict is avoided. Conflicts are the results of misunderstanding...

Our school is a place where no one fights with one another. The students love one another and are great friends. Cinema is a wonderful medium between art and politics, conflict and something much more important. Cinema is an art of discovery. We would know nothing about Japan without Kurosawa and Ozu. We had heard about Sweden, but Bergman introduced us to Swedish people. If you wonder what kind of people Italians are, watch Fellini's and Antonioni's films.... We must create films to tell the world about us.

A film is a technological invention. Whatever we want to say in our film, we use the same tool. We try to make films in our language. We want the films to be a kind of confession heard by others. It does not matter whether we speak Polish, Georgian, Italian, etc. Besides, we tell stories with the help of actors, script and image. Films have positive influence on people, they prove that people are alike and have similar problems, joys and sorrows; we laugh and worry in the same way.

fp How should Georgian phenomena be reflected in films?

Above all, study the history. Georgia has its themes, and they should be told by someone. We look forward to it. Georgia is an ancient country with great traditions and history. The past of Georgia is interesting; I also mean the recent past i.e. the Soviet period. Georgians suffered in this period same as Lithuanians, Romanians and others.

Georgians participated in many events, tried to assist their country and save it. It seemed that Germans had nothing new to say, but in recent years they have made wonderful films. The society has to see its past again and again.

When we are told that unification and globalization are near and when we are taught what they mean, I laugh. Probably these concepts have to be taught to the West by us, because we [not the West] have undergone the most important globalization process [laughs].

>> Tornike Bziava, Pawel Ferdek

Interview with Producer Juliette Lepoutre

MPM Films (Movie Partners in Motion Film) is a French company founded in 2007 by Marie-Pierre Macia and Juliette Lepoutre. The company focuses on discovering new names, and deals with the projects of independent filmmakers like veteran Hungarian Director Bela Tarr. In 2011, his film "Turin Horse", created in cooperation with MPM Films, won the Jury Grand Prix in Berlin. The company is working on several new projects, one of which is a film by Georgian director Teona Grenade – "Brother". Shooting is planned for spring 2012.

fp Back in the Soviet Union the profession of producer was non-existent. The analogue was the film director. The profession of producer is being developed now. It will probably be hard for you to compare the Soviet and Western models of film production. So please tell us about the differences between the American and the European models of film production. What are the priorities in the American and European filmmaking in general?

That is an interesting question. European producers often joke that the American ones always have money, whereas in Europe this is a problem. European producers focus on creative support rather than money. In Europe there is no term like "executive producer", which in the USA means a producer who deals with financial matters only. From the European point of view, the key mission of an independent producer is to support films, especially author's films (film d'autore). This is the key differentiating feature. European producers actively cooperate with various film centers and obtain their support. However, in the USA the state does not support filmmaking and culture in general. In the USA there are "Super Rich" people, who are simply inexistent in Europe. Maybe there are some in Georgia? [Laughs] In the USA, the rich finance cultural events for tax incentives. In Europe there is no analogue to this economic model. To my mind, Europe is still based on cultural and historical grounds, and the governments support this. I think this is not going to change. Although, due to the crisis, things have deteriorated, but the total budget has not been affected. To be more precise, in France the cultural budget has decreased, but the very sense of crisis is different, I mean the crisis in independent filmmaking which has lasted for the past 20 years.

fp MPM focuses on art house films. There are new discoveries and veteran filmmakers. What are the criteria for the selection of unknown directors and their projects? How do you foresee the success of this or that project?

As I mentioned, our aim is to foster love and support of independent films. A producer uses 20% of his time for film production. Therefore he/she should be fond of the project, like the director and other co-producers. Otherwise, it is impossible to make a good film. The career of my partner Marie-Pierre was based on the discovery of new talents. We try to retain this mission. We have not worked on any French project, as we think there are enough producers who concentrate on French films. We are not interested in large-scale projects and deal with the minor international market. Therefore, we

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

travel a lot, attend production markets, cooperate with film centers and always ask what's going on and who is of interest. We have contacts in South America, the Balkan States, and now also Georgia. So we move eastward.

Filmmaking is based on contacts, festivals, etc. We are interested in the countries that need not only financial support but experience and contacts.

If we like a project, but are not sure about the director, we do not deal with it. In author's films the director and script writer is often the same person. A good director can be a bad script writer, and vice versa. Therefore, before starting to cooperate, we watch the short films made by a certain director. If you are going to spend three years on a project, you should be confident of its success. The first film is always risky, but one manages to avoid failure when the right crew is selected.

We took Bela Tarr's script to various financiers and told them: "Read it. Even if you don't understand it, don't worry. It is good, it is Bela Tarr!"

When one deals with directors like Bela Tarr, he knows it won't be financially profitable. One may even lose money, but it is simply necessary to make films like his.

We had huge problems related to Bela Tarr, as his reputation in France is not so high. We were unable to obtain financing from Arte. Our German and Austrian producers left us. Despite this, we went to Budapest and told Bela: "Don't worry, we will obtain financing by all means!" So we traveled to the USA in search of executive producers.

In the USA we found a lady who finances the Art Center in Minneapolis. Fortunately, she adored Bela's works. She said money was not a problem but demanded to be an executive producer. We gladly agreed – the term "executive producer" means nothing to Europeans.

We are a young company and have made only five films, but the results prove that our intuition is right.

fp Your production company was founded in 2007. Please tell us more about it. How did you become involved in filmmaking?

Although I have a completely different background, I have always had a great passion for cinema. I spent 10 years in the USA and worked for a major US company on the development of the international market. Then I thought the only job in filmmaking was that of a director. At that time I was far from imagining ever being involved in films. Being a producer means international and direction contracts and business ideas. When you have a company consisting of at least 50 people, you should have managerial skills to deal with a budget of 2 million euros. This is

difficult. But I had certain experience in management and, besides, I was fond of cinema.

All kinds of experience are necessary. A producer should also be a psychoanalyst. Today I know what I can achieve, but at the age of 20-30 when you are still unaware of who you are and what you want, you have no experience in human relationships, budget distribution, etc., everything is complicated. At the age of 30 one has to struggle every day without the firmness and strength necessary for this profession. Besides, one should analyze that being a producer is not being an artist. Some producers want to be authors, and they are mistaken. I spent the first three years in the company based on the money collected from my previous job. This is the first year I pay taxes with the money earned in the new job. Without experience and previously gathered finances, I would be unable to deal with films. Thus, experience is most important in filmmaking.

Marie-Pierre used to work for the film festival in San Francisco. We met 20 years ago. I remember I thought: "My God, what a wonderful job she has!", - she travels to various countries, meets interesting people and watches films". Then I did not know how hard it was to watch 6-10 films a day. Marie-Pierre made me think in the new direction. I quit my previous job and decided to change my life entirely. I could no longer go on living my old life.

Marie-Pierre had an idea to form a company. She had been in filmmaking for 20 years, so, naturally, she had numerous contacts. In June 2006 Bela Tarr asked her to be the producer of his film. Marie-Pierre said she did not want to do it alone and asked me to join her, as we could share our experiences. This was a naïve decision. But the absence of experience did a good job, as the awareness of the hardships frequently hampers people from starting the film business.

fp What is the usual time necessary before shooting? I mean the period from the initial idea to the first shooting day?

To our experience, it takes a year or two to develop a script. We are extremely demanding because it is hard to finance author's films. If we are not 100% sure the script is good, we abstain from dealing with it. As a rule, the process lasts for a year or two. In Bela Tarr's case, the process lasted for 4 years, although when he came to us, he had a script and he knew this would be his last film. The script was written on 35 pages, but that is Bela Tarr!

The preproduction may last for about 2-4 years. Then follows the shooting period, and, finally post-production which takes about a year.

fp You mentioned co-production. In Georgia co-production with foreign partners has been announced as a priority, although for a country like ours, the hardest problem is to find foreign partners. Are foreign producers interested in Georgia? Why is it important for Georgian directors to make their films with European co-production?

I know about five co-producers who are interested in cooperating with Georgia. I also know the activities of Georgian National Film Center; hence, I am confident there will be success. This is not easy, but you need the right projects and, most importantly, many talented directors.

Being in Georgia, I spend a lot of time with Georgian co-producers, namely Rusudan [Rusudan Glurjidze, Georgian co-producer of Teona Grenade's film "Brother" –F/P], who is a director by profession, Zura [producer Zura Maghalashvili – F/P]. I observe that the sense of life for these people is cinema. In short, you have great potential and the main thing is to use this potential in the right way.

fp What is your impression of Georgian producers and filmmaking? What are the main shortcomings in this field?

When I met Tamara Tatishvili in Cannes, I asked her who Georgian producers were. I often asked this question to Otar Iosseliani's French producers who cooperated with Georgian colleagues. It is important for producers to know one another. Had I not met Zura in Georgia this July, I wouldn't have spent one million euros on a person who was a stranger to me. I simply would not have trusted an unknown person.

Generally, the factor of trust is very important. I have to spend money here, and the Georgian co-producer has to organize shootings. I cannot spend money without trust. Europeans have wrong clichés with regard to Georgia. Therefore, unfortunately, you still have to gain their trust. Each new project will be a new step. Georgian National Film Center and Tamara Tatishvili handle this process very well.

fp How did you start the new project to be implemented in Georgia? And why Georgia?

Teona Mghvdeladze has a French husband named Grenade. I met her two years ago. We had a Russian colleague who once told me: "I am delighted because I have a Georgian friend who is a wonderful director. She has an interesting script and I would like you to read it. I demanded a short film, and Teona had no short films then. So she made one and brought it to us. On seeing the very first frame showing Tbilisi landscape, I thought: "My God, this is Bela Tarr!"

So we liked the film. Later we met Teona and talked a lot. We wanted to understand what she was looking for and what she wanted to tell with her film. This was a sincere conversation which lasted for 2 hours. We read the treatment and were delighted with it. So we agreed and our cooperation started. For a year and a half we worked on the script, and spent six months in search of financing. We won Arte financing and we still negotiate with several major funds and the French Film Center. In Georgia we started the preproduction process: casting, set design, costumes etc. By the end of November we will know the financing decision of the French side. Arte financing already means a good start. This is a great plus when dealing with other financiers.

In short, we are optimistic. Meanwhile, Georgia became a member of Eurimages, and this is also beneficial for us. If everything goes well, we will start shootings in spring. Marie-Pierre and I will attend the entire shooting process.

>> Maka Kukulava

"Wild Field"

Art Cinema Award – prize at the International Film Festival in Venice, "Horizons" program;
Grand Prix at the International Film Festival in Lisbon;
Grand Prix of VIII International Film Festival in Marrakech;
Grand Prix of the Festival of Eastern European Films in Cottbus (Germany);
"White Elephant" - Kinotaur Prize for the best film, best script (Piotr Samoryadov and Alexei Samoryadov), best music (Alexei Aigi), best actor (Oleg Dolin), best supporting role (Roman Madyanov);
"Golden Eagle" – for the Best Film, Best Script, Best Music.

Misha Kalatozishvili – "Wild Field"

When I met Misha Kalatozishvili, everyone was discussing his new film "Wild Field". We also talked about the film. There were young and talented people around Misha. Misha is an exception among producers, as he is interested in the so-called "author's projects". As his colleagues say, his interest in non-commerical projects is based on his exceptional human qualities, and it is rare, especially at a time when people are interested in financial profit only. I thought we would discuss some planned or current projects later... But, unfortunately, there was no chance...

fp I fell in love with the script " - What made you say these words and what do you see in the film?

Above all, this is the main character. The idea is realized in the film only to a certain extent. In our case, the level of production hampers many things rather than helping. Therefore, it is hard to analyze to what extent the initial idea has been implemented in the film. As for the main character, in my opinion, this has been a success. Some people are irritated. There are admirers of the script who see a psychedelic story – split personality, the angel on the mountain, which is viewed as the alter ego of the protagonist. They think the main character is nearly a schizophrenic. For me, everything is just the contrary. I think the film is a story of a man who has the main thing – he does what he likes and lives where he wants to. What else can a man wish for? This has been an attempt to create a film about a happy man.

fp They say you restored the positive hero in Russian films, do you agree with such evaluation?

It can be. The film is about a positive hero.

Photo: Vika Ginina

fp How do the film characters differ from real people?

They don't differ at all. They are people with strengths and weaknesses, they commit both good and evil acts. However, when you want to tell a story in an hour and a half, everything is a bit exaggerated. You have to accuse the main character of many things if you want to fully reveal his features. In real life there is more time for this. Thus, you are obliged to lead your character to commit such acts that reveal his inner world in a short time. There is no other difference, simply, in a film contours are more vivid than in real life.

fp "Wild Field" - What can you say about the title?

I was born in the Russian Empire. Therefore steppe is my space too. Even though I am Georgian, I am spiritually and intellectually linked with Russian culture. However, I doubt that we are European. By "we" I mean both Russians and Georgians. This is a matter of mentality: we are not materialistic like Europeans. This is the main factor that hampers our integration to Europe. Such integration will certainly cause changes in our mentality, and we are not yet ready for this. This is much harder to overcome than political intrigues.

CRITICS' ASSESSMENTS

I have read some reviews, but I couldn't guess whether they were positive or negative. There was Razlogov's review in "Isskusstvo Kino" (Cinema Art). I can say this review was written by a real critic. He does not tell the subject line, he tries to understand the film and grasp its depth. "Hollywood Reporter" also contained a nice article, but it was mostly the author's emotional perception, which is also good.

In general, there is a tendency to label everything. This has been harmful for film-making. Nowadays if you find it hard to define the exact genre of the film, it is a signal – the film will not be seen.

"PHILOSOPHICAL WESTERN "

I always find it difficult to determine the categories of genres. The issue started in Venice, where the film was called a "Philosophical Western", and journalists soon spread this name. When you see a lonely person in a large space, an association of the Western appears. This is already a stereotype. Certainly, this film is not a Western. A motorcycle driving the main character into an endless space cannot be considered an attribute of a Western. There is only one shot in the film, and the main character does not use weapons at all.

fp Such films are called non-commercial. What should be done to create more facilities for "author's films"? Since you are a producer, the reader would be interested to know your opinion in this regard.

Georgia cannot deal with this alone. In order to achieve the above-mentioned, we should become part of a larger space.

The Americans show their films to the entire world. I mean Hollywood films. Money arrives from everywhere. The Europeans try to show their films throughout Europe and collect European money. With regard to films, we exist in an isolated world. There are nearly no prospects for internal development. We have to make a step towards Europe. In Russia there are 1,840 screens nowadays, but they are able to have three times more. In France, which is much smaller than Russia, there are three times more screens. So we should move up to European standards. However, Russia is too ambitious to pay attention to Europe and competes with the USA. This competition is extremely hard, especially in a fully occupied space, as the USA has a long-developed business. It is incredible how the Americans treat films. Even Hitler has not been so mean. Everything outside Hollywood is completely ignored. Russian movie-theaters give more privilege to American films than Russian ones. Nowadays the entire world is the American market.

fp With the exception of Hollywood probably...

Yes, because India's population exceeds one billion, out of which only 25% are well-off. However, these 25% are cinema-goers. In Russia not even ten per cent of the population regularly visits movie-theaters. The maximum is 7-8%.

fp Which was the last Georgian film you saw?

Levan Tutberidze's "I Will Die Without You". The film was still in the working process. I can say that the film is made on the European level. I mean shooting, editing, actors.

fp What does it mean to be a director in a country where they teach based on Kalatozov?

By the way, Kalatozov was more appreciated abroad than in Russia. Here they remembered Kalatozov only when Scorsese and Coppola released a disc of the film "I, Cuba". There is nothing that completely disturbs you or completely helps you. Every cloud has a silver lining. Unlike other children, I have never wanted to be a fireman, a policeman or a cosmonaut. I always knew I was going to work in cinema. Any other choice is inadmissible for a child who constantly meets filmmakers, spends every summer on film expeditions and watches films from birth. I was one year old when I happened to be in the film "I, Grandma, Iliko and Ilarion". My father worked on this film as director of photography. There is a scene with me – a woman is carrying me in her arms.... In some cases, such childhood memories cause the opposite result - hatred of films, but this was not so in my case.

Speaking of directors, there are directors whose vision is much closer to me than Kalatozov's film language.

fp Can you name them?

Bresson, Alby... Nevertheless, more than all the directors in the world, I certainly love Kalatozov - as Kalatozov.

>> Irine Zhordania

From Painted Animation to "Shrek"...

He works with Warner Bros. Pictures, Sony Pictures, Columbia Pictures and other major studios in Hollywood. He has created visual effects for popular films like "The Day After Tomorrow", "Mr. & Mrs. Smith", "Shrek the Third" and "2012"...

In his opinion, computer graphics make it possible to better live out one's fantasy. You perform the role of a demiurge, and create the virtual world where all the manipulation facilities are in your hands.

Who helps Johnny Depp and Brad Pitt work wonders on the screen? Who is the author of "visual attractions" that have enchanted millions of spectators? We present an interview with a master of computer graphics (visual effects) from Los Angeles, Val Kharitonashvili.

fp Val, they say before you left for the USA you were unable to perform even the simplest computer operations. How did your career start? What was your experience before you arrived in the US?

Yes, I knew almost nothing about computers. I thought a monitor was a computer.... First I created painted animation. I studied at the Tbilisi Academy of Arts. It was in the 1990s, during the civil war in Tbilisi. Then I went to study in Moscow, where I worked at the Pilot studio of A. Tatarskiy and F. Khitruk. I gained some experience there. My teacher was F. Khitruk, a famous animator. You probably remember his works "Film, Film, Film", "Winnie the Pooh" and others.

... Then the so-called "default" i.e. economic crisis started in Russia. The studio had problems and was unable to pay our salaries. Film-production almost stopped. One of the famous animation studios in Hungary invited us to work there, so we went.

fp You were probably not using computer graphics then...

No, I only did painted animation. Later Gia Kereselidze, my classmate at the Academy of Arts, invited me to do a joint project. Gia lived in Washington, so I left for America. When the project was completed, I had to return to Georgia. Gia decided to open a studio so that we could start our own business and my work visa could be prolonged. Unlike LA, in Washington there are almost no animation studios. Ultimately we failed to register the studio, as they said we had insufficient motivation and too few implemented projects.

At that time "Shrek" and "Toy Story" were screened. These animated films were created by means of computer graphics. I decided to study it....

fp Who could have imagined then that you would become the author of one of the "Shrek" series?

Certainly this was unimaginable...

fp Val, please tell us about your activities. What specifically do you do? Let us peer into your creative "kitchen"...

What I do cannot be achieved by an actor. Today everything can be done by means of a computer. However, this is sometimes more expensive than the film shooting itself. For example, recently I worked on "Green Lantern". The main character is a kind of Superman who flies and takes care of everything with his super power. Therefore, his image and actions require unrealistic visualization. The task was hard but interesting. I retained only the face of the main actor, and his body was created entirely in the computer. His flight and bodily movements are surrounded by an energy field. This was important, but hard to achieve. Whatever is created by the demiurge in the film, is created by my computer graphics.

fp They say actors will soon be replaced by computerized clones. We can already name some examples...

Yes, as I mentioned above, only the actor's head was retained in "Green Lantern". However, technologies are not so perfect yet. It is hard and expensive to create a character realistic enough so that the audience does not feel cheated. It is also time-consuming.

I personally don't think actors should be done away with, although, with the exception of one pirate, all pirates were created by us in the film "Pirates of the Caribbean: At Worlds End". In this film I focused on the crab scene and water scenes. It is much easier to shoot an actor. Computer graphics help achieve what actors are

ORIGINAL
Bazooka
BUBBLE GUM
5¢

unable to do. An actor cannot fly, for example. Besides, in some films there are explosions, destruction, shooting... In such cases visual effects are cheaper and more impressive than the actions of stuntmen. If a stuntman performs an action, later on you cannot change anything, whereas in the computer this is possible.

fp What do you think of "Avatar"?

It is interesting but too stylized.

fp Is 3D a new stage in the development of screen culture, like TV, video and digital technologies were?

Nowadays practically all films are made in 3D. The studio that made "Shrek" announced that they would go on using this technology only. Besides, computer animation will develop more and more.

fp We all remember "Mr. and Mrs. Smith" with Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie. Which episodes in this film are created by you?

House explosion, shootings. The actors only point the weapons without shooting. Sometimes I create natural phenomena, i.e. I construct the atmosphere inside the frame. In the film "I Am Legend" the characters are zombies. They are afraid of daylight. My task was to create suspense in the frame where daylight penetrates. In the computer I made little bits of sun ray dust to make it more natural. Can you imagine, these spots are visible in the camera out of focus. This is natural, it creates atmosphere and does not leave an impression of a special effect.

fp They say Aranovskiy does not use computer graphics in his films and all effects are done by hand...

If he does not use computer graphics, I will not be familiar with his films.

fp Emmerich's "The Day After Tomorrow" and "2012" belong to the catastrophe genre. These films are very popular. Can you remember how you worked on these films?

While working on "2012" I was asked to do the graphics of the destruction of the US Capitol. There were four episodes – the Capitol breaks into pieces, and these parts fall on each other, etc. It took me more than a month to create this episode. Then the director decided to leave this scene out, but I completed the job.

fp Maybe the destruction of the Capitol is part of a mythology which is topical for Emmerich – the end of the world or, more precisely, civilization, the symbol of which in the modern world is the USA.

Probably. These films are targeted at the US market. Americans are mostly interested in their world. All films are different. Different objectives have to be met. At least five people cooperate when creating computer graphics. For example, the energy field around the character in the new film. All five of us did it in our own way. For this purpose a mini-program is created. In this film this program is done by me and all graphics use it. In "Mr. and Mrs. Smith", which includes many shoot-outs, each of us could not do them in our own way, because the audience would notice the difference. One and the same weapon would shoot one way in one episode and differently in the other.

fp Are sound effects made by others?

While working on "Shrek" and other animation, sound is recorded in advance, i.e. the actors record texts in advance and then the image is matched to it. For feature films, live voice is recorded and effects and noises are added later. I don't deal with that, I only create visual effects.

fp Are you involved in post-production? What technologies do you use?

My position is called "post production computer animator". There are also visual effects, special effects. The first one is made at the postproduction stage, the other – while shooting. I work on visual effects.

fp In the beginning of our interview you mentioned Khitruk and Tatarskiy. Does it make a difference for you whether you create things in the computer or paint them?

Both are interesting. Simply put, a computer offers more facilities to implement my fantasy. In a computer you can create the environment and nature and move them with a camera. If you want to change something in a picture, you have to paint it anew. In a computer there are more opportunities to change and refine things, e.g. texture. For instance, you paint a bottle. You can make it as a glass bottle, then change it into a clay bottle, etc. But when you paint, you have to draw new bottles again and again. Painted animation has almost ceased to exist. Only Disney continues to work in this direction. Probably painted animation will disappear altogether.

fp There is a similar tendency in cinema, I mean shooting on film...

Yes, films are shot against a green background and the rest is done on the computer.

fp Do you have a hobby?

Photography. Computer animation is my hobby too. It is not just a profession.

>> Irina Demetradze

industry today

Epic

>> Ketie Danelia

All films start with an idea that is developed as a result of collective creative work.
Often, a specific place is a source of inspiration. During the past two years the number of people willing to shoot films in Georgia increased significantly. Two important projects are slated for implementation in 2012.

One of these projects is "Epic" – a film by Pawel Pawlikowski, which will be shot this summer in Georgia by the famous British company Film and Music Entertainment, with support from the Georgian National Film Center. Professional circles regard this successful company and this director as significant and influential players in contemporary European cinema. They create films worth millions and conclude international contacts with the aim of future cooperation...

For two months we had daily correspondence with the producers of Film and Music Entertainment, Samantha Taylor and Mike Downey. After a detailed study of the script, locations were selected to be shown to producers, line producers and the director. After two months of intense work, in early November 2011, a number of interesting and important guests visited our country.

Pawlikowski is of Polish origin although since the age of 14 he has lived in the UK, Germany and Italy. Knowledge of various cultures makes his films versatile and attractive. Interestingly, Pawlikowski makes his films without a storyboard.

Pawlikowski's filmography embraces five documentary and several feature films, including:

The Woman in the Fifth (2011) (starring: Christine Scott Thomas, Ethan Hawke). This film was finished recently and premiered at the Toronto Film Festival.

My Summer of Love (2005) (starring: Emily Blunt, Natalie Press). The film was awarded at the following festivals: BAFTA Awards; Directors Guild of Great Britain; Edinburgh International Film Festival; Polish Film Awards.

Last Resort (2000) has been awarded various prizes at BAFTA, Edinburgh International Film Festival; London Film Festival; Thessaloniki Film Festival;

The producers of "Epic", Samantha Taylor and Mike Downey, have worked together for 11 years. They create films in various countries of Europe, including Eastern European states. This is why the director decided to cooperate with them. Much depended on the preparatory visit of the "Epic" crew. The producers wondered whether film shooting was possible in Georgia and whether Georgia could offer interesting locations.

During their three-day visit we saw numerous places in both eastern and western Georgia. We found that Georgia had all the necessary landscapes. Ideal landscape and intriguing architecture preconditioned the choice of the filmmakers. The director filmed the landscapes and even gasped as he admired the picturesque views.

It is very important for the Georgian National Film Center to support such projects: local professionals are employed, investment is attracted to the country and Georgia is promoted as an interesting location. It should be underlined that three world-famous stars will act in the film: Ethan Hawke, who is deeply interested in the project, Sir Ben Kingsley, and Christopher Lambert, who performs himself in the film. These stars will guarantee the film's success.

Brief information about the film: The action takes place in an imaginary country where unusual events develop rapidly. The film is set to be a black comedy.

The director was so impressed by Georgian landscapes that he even decided to change some scenes in the film to adjust them to specific locations. However, landscapes alone are not sufficient for a film - it is necessary to create adequate infrastructure. Film stars require luxurious hotels and there are proper ones only in Tbilisi and Batumi.

The Georgian National Film Center is eager to promote Georgia as an important country for locations. In order to facilitate shootings, the Film Center negotiates with various state agencies concerning tax incentives for filmmaking activities. This is a time-consuming process.

Personally for me, the 4-day visit was very interesting both from professional and creative standpoints. Relations with interesting people prove once again that a film is a living organism, a joint commitment of interested people to create a collective product. About 100 people are involved in the film, each trying hard to make an interesting film of high quality. Shooting on "Epic" will probably end in July and the screening will take place either at the end of 2012 or the beginning of 2013, depending on the decision of the producers.

One thing is clear: Georgia is attractive to foreign producers, and this creates jobs for local filmmakers and ensures development of infrastructure. For their part, the state agencies do their best to improve the infrastructure in the country. So, let us hope that Georgia will one day be a film location of world-class standards. fp

Film Director Pawel Pawlikowski; Producer Mike Downey

Photo: Ketie Danelia, Giorgi Melikishvili

New Names in Georgian Film Dramaturgy

>> Irma Janjgava

Evening hosts;
Maka Kukulava;
Jury Members;
Nicholas Rurua and
Mariam Tsuleiskiri

Photo: Ivane Goliadze

"I have found my dramatist," this is what film director Tamar Shavgulidze told me after the "Gala" screenwriting competition awards ceremony. She meant Maka Kukulava – the winner of this year's contest. This was the aim of the project – to help Georgian directors "find their dramatists".

October 8, 2011. The garden of the National Museum in Tbilisi. Gala Literary Awards ceremony. Excitement of the public and the nominees. They announce a nomination – "Best Script of the Year". The Minister of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia Nicholas Rurua presents the prize. There is applause as they announce: "Maka Kukulava" for the script "Ada's Cinema".

Everything started a year ago. The joint project took year-long joint efforts of the Georgian National Film Center, the Tbilisi Assembly – the organizer of the contest, the Ministry of Culture and Protection of Monuments and, most importantly, the participants of the contest. However, we will speak about the participants later. Now we would like to discuss the importance of the contest, its results, scripts and authors, and the plans of the Georgian National Film Center with regard to script development in Georgia.

Let us look at the situation regarding the chain of values - "project and script development". Poor resources and investment are insufficient for the development of the above-mentioned chain of values. Films are produced with poorly developed scripts, which become a reason for criticism later on. One and the same person is usually the director, producer and scriptwriter, which is undesirable.

In the modern world great efforts and huge amounts of money are necessary to ensure the adequate development of projects and scripts. We will not discuss the importance of this chain of values here. It goes without saying that each film depends on a well-developed script and project.

Taking into account current Georgian reality, we try to gain a deeper insight into the process. In Georgia there had always existed a close link between writers and filmmakers. The idea of the literary contest emerged on the basis of this tradition. At a certain moment of development of Georgian cinema the above-mentioned link was simply lost, and there appeared a question: are there no talented film dramatists or is there no link between film dramatists and film producers?

The contest proved that there are professionals who create interesting works.

Now we will enumerate the participants of the contest and their works. In all, 41 scripts were submitted to the Georgian National Film Center for participation in the Gala contest. This is an important fact in itself. What caused such interest towards Gala? Above all, the contest is popular in literary circles. The fact that the scripts would be evaluated by two commissions increased the reliability of the contest. The internal commission of Georgian National Film Center also performed high quality work: they studied script evaluation experience worldwide and adjusted it to Georgian reality. The scripts were evaluated based on the criteria widely used in Europe. Later, at the meeting of the commission, each script was analyzed in detail. After that, the most worthy scripts were submitted to the literary contest:

Maka Kukulava "Ada's Cinema"
Nugzar Metreveli "Button"
Beso (Givi) Odisharia "Steam, or Invisible Pirosmani"
Otar Shamatava, Zaza Buadze "Caucasian Brown Bear"
Temur Chkuaseli "The Soil Warmed with Songs"
Data Pirtskalava "Sweet Boy"
Giorgi Keburia "Wings"

Briefly about the scripts and their authors: Representatives of every generation and various regions of Georgia participated in the contest, which is a significant fact. The diversity of genres was obvious: mystical drama, tragicomedy, action drama, postmodern drama, lyric comedy, fairy tale, historical drama, satire, social drama, satirical drama, adventure, melodrama, mystical fairy-tale. There were scripts for both high-budget and low-budget films.

Results of the Contest

The implementation of the project was the first step towards improving the quality of scripts. The Georgian National Film Center believes that the contest was the first serious step in the development of film dramaturgy. However, changes should be made in the field of education as well.

The authorities of the Georgian National Film Center are willing to implement other activities with regard to improvement of the quality of scripts, namely, to allocate grants for script development. While studying this field, worldwide practice was taken into account.

Based on the results of the literary contest "Gala", Georgian National Film Center plans to implement one more significant initiative – the function of the "link" between script-writers, producers and directors.

The meeting will be attended by the scriptwriters who participated in the contest as well as successful contemporary producers and directors. Both sides await the meeting with great interest. The leadership of the Georgian National Film Center is currently working on the format of the meeting. Against the background of that discussion, the script writers will present their projects to producers and directors. It is highly probable that the given meeting will be a birthplace of numerous new film projects.

Taking into account the results of the contest, we hope our cooperation with the Gala literary contest will be annual.

Certainly, the activities implemented by Georgian National Film Center are not sufficient for solving the problems related to the above-mentioned chain of values. However, one thing is obvious: cooperation with the literary contest is the first step in the promotion of film dramaturgy and an action aimed at the return of professionals to the field of cinema.

All the scripts submitted to the literary contest are kept in the database of the Georgian National Film Center. If producers/directors are interested, the representatives of the Film Center will gladly establish links between the script-writers and directors/producers.

The Georgian National Film Center has asked the winners of this year's literary contest – Maka Kukulava and Uta Beria – to be the editors of, one of the issue of "Film Print". **fp**

Bosch Stiftung

>> Ketie Danelia

In May 2010 Tamara Tatishvili (Director of Georgian National Film Center) called me and said: "Ketie, this is a project we are to implement". Impressed by the project and with faith in the younger generation, I got motivated. Since then, the Georgian National Film Center has tried to persuade the Bosch Stiftung to include Georgia in the list of countries that have access to 70,000 Euros financing. This amount is wholly sufficient for a director to shoot a short film.

The Bosch Stiftung is one of the largest and most successful foundations in Germany. It has existed since 1964, is associated with the Robert Bosch company and controls 92% of its assets. The Stiftung shares the vision of Robert Bosch and implements numerous projects in Germany and elsewhere. The Robert Bosch Stiftung encompasses six fields, including co-production of films in East Germany and Eastern Europe.

The project launched in Cannes by the Georgian National Film Center in May 2010 was implemented in July 2011, thus, now the Robert Bosch Stiftung is open to Georgian filmmakers.

On July 10-11 a joint project of the Robert Bosch Stiftung and the Georgian National Film Center involved industrial meetings.

Our main aim is to enable young filmmakers to implement projects on the international level. GNFC aims at discovering new talents and showing them the ways of obtaining alternative financing in the film industry. This project of Robert Bosch Stiftung is an ideal opportunity for young filmmakers to take their first steps.

During the trainings in July, participants got acquainted with alternative ways of financing, the importance of film festivals and participation procedures, budgeting and project presentation. They acquired skills that will be of great use in their future careers. As a result of meetings, German producers selected several projects and included them in the co-financing competition announced by the Robert Bosch Foundation.

The significance of this project for our country was underlined by Nikolaj Nikitin during our conversation in Cannes.

Nikolaj Nikitin selects Eastern European films for the Berlin and Wiesbaden Film festivals. He is an advisor for Talent Campus, the Co-Production Market, the World Cinema Fund. He has been a member of the jury at international film festivals in Chicago, Hamburg, Karlovy Vary, Oberhausen, Palic, Pilsen, Sarajevo, Sochi, Sofia, Tampere, Tallinn and Tel-Aviv. He attends numerous festivals worldwide. He is a member of FIPRESCI and the European Film Academy, member of the jury of the Robert Bosch Stiftung.

fp How does Robert Bosch Stiftung work and why is it interested in young filmmakers?

The Robert Bosch Stiftung is chiefly involved in international relations, health care and education, but it also deals with cultural development and intercultural dialogue. It was created in France and later spread to Central Europe. At a certain moment, films turned out to be a successful way of cooperation and intercultural dialogue between Germany, Central and Eastern Europe.

I was happy to be in this project, as I am well aware of the situation in Germany and Europe in general. I am lucky to cooperate with a foundation that focuses on young filmmakers who are more interested in making films than getting profit. This project is, to a certain extent, "free money" i.e. support to talented filmmakers from Germany, Central and Eastern Europe and now – the Caucasus. The Robert Bosch Stiftung makes it possible to create films. We do not expect to recover the allocated financing. Besides, we give complete freedom with reference to the creative side, i.e. shooting. This project is free, independent and content-oriented.

The Jury is composed of professionals who focus more on the content of film than its budget. I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in a project that supports young filmmakers.

fp Cooperation between German co-producers and Georgian filmmakers is starting. Why Georgia?

My visit to Georgia and acquaintance with the Georgian National Film Center have persuaded me that many good things are under way here. There are numerous talented young filmmakers in Georgia. The first films created in the past three years include Giorgi Ovashvili's brilliant work "The Other Bank" which had success in GoEast in Berlin. GoEast is closely linked to Robert Bosch Stiftung prize. The film was awarded and screened at various festivals.

One more wonderful film, "Susa", participated in Berlinale. "Street Days" was presented in Rotterdam. All this means evident progress. We should also take into account the traditions of Georgian cinema. After VGIK [film school in Moscow], the second great film school was created by Georgians. I am responsible not only for Georgia but for the entire Central and Eastern Europe, hence I observe Russian films too. I notice that amazing films are created by Georgian directors who live and work in Russia, as well as directors of other nationalities who live in Georgia. The influence is strong, but our aim is to embrace the entire region. Therefore, we start with Georgia and later move to Armenia. In addition, we bring Azerbaijani filmmakers to Tbilisi. It is important that Georgia is a starting point. Yet, it should be stressed that the system is transparent and all Caucasians can take part. This is an open, transparent and widely accessible program.

Nikolaj Nikitin and Frank Albers

fp What has Robert Bosch Stiftung discovered while being in Georgia?

Above all, Georgia itself and its landscapes. And Tbilisi, which is lively and fascinating city. We saw huge potential. We met young filmmakers and discovered that their creative thinking reflects the current processes in Georgia. And we are deeply interested in these processes. I have already mentioned Levan Koghuashvili, whose film reflects current processes: drug abuse, drug trafficking, murder, delinquency. It should be underlined that young filmmakers do not avoid contemporary problems and do not try to hide in the happy days of the past. The same can be said about "Susa" and "The Other bank". These films and my conversations with their authors have proved that young Georgian filmmakers move in the right direction. Besides, co-production is very important. Young Georgian filmmakers raise many interesting subjects that will arouse the interest of foreign audiences and European co-producers alike. The themes are modern and sensitive. This attracts the attention of financiers and co-producers.

fp You have discovered talented young directors that gained fame later. Can you name any of them?

Support for creative teams is most interesting. It is a wonderful feeling to see a project turn into a film with your support. Later the film is admired by colleagues and achieves success at festivals. For example, the German-Serbian film "Milan" by Michaela Kezele who later became my friend. The film was nominated for an Oscar and won numerous other awards. The film reflects the wounds of the Balkan war. Without our support, the film would not have been made. Now the director is working on the first feature film. Another example is a German-Romanian film directed by Ada Solomon, Paul Neguescu and David Lindner. Now they cooperate without our support. This project is a platform for young filmmakers. Our aim is to help them make their first steps, later they continue to work and cooperate without our assistance.

In May 2011, 34 projects participated in a competition announced by the Georgian National Film Center and the Robert Bosch Stiftung. Eleven projects were selected for industry meetings. Georgian National Film Center wishes success to each project on the way to the movie theater. Even if only one project is implemented, we will consider this as significant step by us aimed at the development of the Georgian film sector. **fp**

The Creative Economy: Mapping the Film Sector in Georgia

>> Maya Kipshidze

"Excellence in artistic expression, abundance of talent, And openness to new influences And experimentation are not the privileges of rich countries. With effective nurturing, these sources of creativity can open up new opportunities for developing countries to increase their share of world trade and to 'leap frog' into new areas of wealth creation"

(UNCTAD* statement at its 11th conference by in Sao Paulo, Brazil, June 2004)

All around the world, the "creative economy" is talked about as an important and growing part of the global economy. Governments and local authorities are increasingly recognising its importance as a generator of jobs, wealth and cultural engagement.

The UK has been a leader in the development of this agenda, not just as a driver of the economy but also as a means to promote social inclusion, diversity and development.

The British Council, which opened its branch in Georgia in 1993, is the UK's international organisation for cultural and educational opportunities. It connects people worldwide with creative ideas and learning opportunities from the UK and builds lasting relationships between the UK and other countries. Therefore we were extremely pleased when Tamara Tatishvili, Director of the National Film Centre of Georgia (GNFC), approached us with the idea of mapping the film sector in Georgia as one

of thirteen creative sectors, which include advertising, architecture, design, fashion, film, video games, music, and publishing.

The Creative Industries unit of the British Council was established in 1999 to work with the UK's creative sector and to develop a programme of work that would share the UK's experience of developing a creative economy and the wider impact of this process in terms of education, social inclusion, economic regeneration and international engagement. The UK has the largest creative sector in the European Union. In terms of GDP, it is the largest in the world. According to UNESCO it is, in absolute terms, the most successful exporter of cultural goods and services ahead even of the US. London alone accounts for about 40% of the UK's entire creative economy.

GNFC identified BOP Consulting, a recognised leader in this field, as having offered technical and advisory support in similar work to a range of countries including South Africa, Brazil and China (Shanghai). It was established in 1997 and has offices in both London and Edinburgh. This specialist research consultancy focuses on how culture and creativity underpin social and economic development. The majority of their work is concerned with the development and implementation of public policy for the cultural and creative sectors, but increasingly they are also working in areas such as regeneration, innovation and education. Their clients include national and international agencies such as UNESCO, the European Commission, DCMS**, NESTA***, UK Film Council, and the Arts Council (for more details on details of BOP's work please see www.bop.co.uk).

In the beginning of April we were pleased to bring over two UK experts, Josephine Burns (Director) and Richard Taylor (Head of Research), from BOP Consulting. They conducted a series of workshops on mapping the film sector in Georgia for GNFC staff and made a series of presentations to high level officials, MPs and stakeholders.

Before coming to Georgia BOP Consulting undertook a review of existing film policy in Georgia and came up with initial policy recommendations that emphasised relevant tax breaks and investment opportunities. Their research examined five different policy models worldwide to identify which could be the most appropriate public support system for film in Georgia.

Why Georgia? Why is it so important? What it will bring to Georgia?

Filmmaking in Georgia has deep historic roots and has witnessed great achievements. I remember that It was not that long ago, looking at one of the aspects of film industry, Nick Holdsworth from Variety, Hollywood's and the world's leading film trade journal, described Georgia at Cannes as a promising country for co-productions, and especially for locations. Helping Georgia's economic and artistic development through financial investment, job creation and attracting the world's interest in Georgia's creativity. Georgia needs to be involved in global film projects and to promote itself as low cost co-production location.

Nick Holdsworth also said that film production in Georgia still suffers from the consequences of war and the government does not have a chance to support its development, especially against the background of the global economic crisis, and Hollywood in particular is unaware of how great Georgian film making potential is. Although I would add here that the situation has changed and as a result of Georgian government's efforts, some co-productions have been made possible and Georgian film production is gradually and successfully making its way onto the international market.

The mapping of the Georgian film sector is likely to be the first step in a nationwide mapping of the creative industries in the country, to help develop a strategic approach to the growth of the creative industries. It is recognised that film is closely related to other sectors such as television, music, advertising and theatre, and this study will also look at how the film sector supports and interacts with these, and how such connections can be developed to mutual economic benefit.

The study will collect both qualitative and quantitative data on how the film sector is advancing the image and an understanding of Georgia in a global context, through supporting the promotion of Georgia in international relations.

By the end of the mapping exercise, through an in-depth analysis of approximately 300 interviews we shall have a detailed quantitative assessment of the size of the film sector, including numbers of people employed, numbers of businesses and economic turnover. We shall have a qualitative assessment of the overall state of Georgian film and how it operates (including skills, markets, workplace/sites, cultural connections, etc.) and how the sector can be developed in the future. We shall also have an increased understanding of the role of film in positioning Georgia globally and how the government and its agencies can support this. And we shall have raised awareness and understanding of the value of mapping as the basis for designing effective interventions – knowing what is happening and what can be done. What's most important is that we shall have increased the capacity and skills of local actors in economic research.

GNFC, which has a great team, will then be able to build capacity internally, both in terms of skills and information, and will be able to make future use of the data for a range of purposes such as bids for international funds and reporting to government and stakeholders. GNFC's ownership of the tools used for the mapping will allow them to re-run the study in future years: the first study will define a benchmark and the growth and success of the sector will be tested against this benchmark.

Analysis of the survey findings will also enable further economic analysis, such as calculating the film sector's contribution to Georgia's GDP, as well as providing a much more informed view of the development needs and prospects of the sector.

We look forward to publication of the final report in the autumn and wish the GNFC luck in all its endeavours. We hope that the launch of the report will raise awareness about the importance of the film sector inside and outside Georgia and, more generally, raise awareness of the creative industries and their economic potential.

It is important to mention that the project enjoyed crucial support from the Ministry of Culture and Monument protection of Georgia. **fp**

MINI EAVE in Tbilisi

>> Irina Demetradze

"Competent" discussion of politics and cinema is common in Georgia. Such discussions usually mean negative evaluation and forecasts. In general, negative mentality and skepticism are the main "merits" of Georgian society. I would call this a problem of "acquisition". Whatever occurs around us is "alien". Bridges, hotels, concerts - all this belongs to the government and not people. The situation is similar in film criticism.

The Georgian film industry, and the process in general are viewed either as private or as government institutions. "We", the critics, do not participate, it does not concern us. We are not responsible. "We" only derogate or praise (if we are personally interested). "Our" place is on the summit of Olympus. Probably those people who like all ironic posts in social media know nothing of cinema and simply do not think independently. They merely compensate for their inferiority. Lumpens and aristocrats are equally unacceptable for them. Sometimes concepts are misunderstood and "aristocrat" becomes synonymous with "snob".

I myself have discovered a lot of problems with Georgian cinema, but I don't think they can be solved either by snobs or "tusslers". These are psycho-social complexes of concrete people whose "tolerance" embraces nothing but perversion and anti-orthodoxy. Working on these materials, I tried to retain balance in my position and I asked famous foreign experts to share their opinion about the current processes in filmmaking.

Everything started during the Festival in Cannes in 2010. The delegation of Georgian the National Film Center met Alan Fountain, the head of one of the most authoritative professional training programs, MINI EAVE. This year, on March 25-27, MINI EAVE's first workshop was held in Georgia, focusing on project development and networking issues.

The training embraced the following issues: script development, project development, legal aspects of co-production, financing at the development and production stages, financing of co-production, communication and pitching, and project packaging. The aim is to rectify the shortcomings in the contemporary Georgian film industry. For instance, dramaturgy, which is still far from perfect in the latest Georgian films.

The majority of directors write scripts themselves. Authenticity is a dramaturgical device for them. The story is on the subject line level. There is almost no plot, i.e. author's discourse. The directors are sometimes ashamed to adapt genre codes (which is obviously a problem of mentality – as a legacy of the Soviet past, "genre" is a synonym for "commercial", i.e. non-Art-House cinema), sometimes they are unable to adapt genre codes due to the lack of professionalism. In the past decades "city sagas" were chiefly represented on the screen, currently nearly every script is on the war theme. Certainly, there is a name for this – paradigm. Unfortunately, it is a paradigm of consciousness and not of the market.

Denis Vaslin (co-production expert, Netherlands) has been visiting Georgia for 12 years already. He is well acquainted with the post-Soviet space. In his opinion, films created by Giorgi Ovashvili, Rusudan Pirveli and Levan Koghuashvili are a sign of the revival of Georgian cinema. The expert got acquainted with each project participating in the workshop, yet he abstained from making comments. He only made mention of "Bakhmaro" by Salome Jashi and Ana Dziapshipa. Denis Vaslin is actively involved in creative documentary. In his opinion, in this regard Georgia has a huge potential and he would willingly cooperate in future. Vaslin has already worked on the Armenian documentary film "BORDER" (directed by Arutyun Khachatryan). Vaslin says there are numerous promising directors in Georgia.

Some of them have already achieved success in Europe, e.g. Nino Kirtadze and Dito Tsintsadze, who work by European standards. As for the participants of the workshop, co-production is the only alternative for them, as their films should be oriented towards the European market. Commercial success is difficult and almost impossible to achieve. National features and cinematographic language simply must be comprehensible for Europe. The values should be invested in the Western space. In this respect, I think Aktan Arym Kubat's "Svet-Ake" (producer-Denis Vaslin) is of interest. Apart from the ordinary story, set in a provincial town in Kyrgyzstan, the film reflects the reality of the entire post-Soviet space. Vaslin says the film is national and the director relies on his personal existential experience, but the story is large-scale and adds: "In my opinion, recent Georgian cinema lacks this large scale..."

As for co-production, it has enabled many interesting projects of late , e.g. films by Tornike Bziava and Salome Jashi.

Project implementation and success depend on other aspects too: communication, project pitching and packaging. According to Riina Sildos (producer from Estonia), it took Estonia 15 years to create the European model of film industry and film market, whereas it took Georgia only two years. Project packaging, development, participation in international film markets, contacts with foreign producers - all this is yet to be learnt by young Georgian filmmakers.

Says Sildos: "Georgian films are well-known in Europe, everyone remembers them and the interest to the country is strong. This plus the political factor – interest towards the region. Georgians have to take advantage of this opportunity. Georgians have film traditions, but sometimes tradition becomes a burden for the new generation and forms certain complexes, e.g. the Bergman complex in Sweden, the

Photo: Anano Asatiani

Alan Fountain
Keti Machavariani,
Sofia Bazghadze

Tarkovsky complex in Russia etc."

Sildos also underlined one circumstance: in earlier times there was a structured market – the Soviet Union. Currently there is a different multicultural space with its own paradigm. Now the state cannot fulfill the role of complete donor. Thus, it is necessary to find alternative financing. It is also important for Georgian films to have a target audience in their own countries. A country needs not only art house films - commercial, genre films are also necessary, as well as animation and documentary projects. Formation of the internal market is of vital importance. According to the essence of the workshop, the distribution market should be obtained and foreign producers should be attracted on the project level. This is the function and aim of film markets.

The first profession of Riina Sildos is semiotics. She was professor at Tartu University and a student of the legendary Yuri Lotman. When I asked her whether this experience helped her, she said: semiotics initially influenced the science of cinema and the filmmaking process. Nowadays, when I read a project or a script, I pay attention not to the narrative but to the subtext. I try to see and grasp the hidden idea.

The following projects participated in the workshop: "Charter Flight" (producers – Irakli Baghaturia, Beso Solomanashvili; script-writer – Vakho Varazi), "Hippocratic Oath" (Producer – Ana Dziapshipa; script-writer – Sandro Jandieri), "Professor in Love" (producer –Archil Gelovani; script-writer- Levan Koghuashvili, co-producer and script-writer – Valerian Kirkitadze), "Tomorrow" (Producer – Sofia Bazghadze; script-writer - Keti Machavariani).

Archil Gelovani and Levan Koghuashvili are authors of two most successful projects of the recent past - "Women from Georgia" and "Street Days". This year Archil Gelovani's new project, "The Hunter" (directed by Bakur Bakuradze), participated in the Un Certain Regard competition program of the Cannes festival. Archil Gelovani's education and business embrace mathematics and business, so, as he says, he is a structural person. Whether film means more than just business for him, he cannot decide yet.

"I cannot say my projects are profitable. However, the new project that I plan to implement with Rezo Gigineishvili aims to gain profit. The script and cast are aimed at the attraction of the audience," Gelovani says.

"Levan and I have been friends for 20 years. 'Professor in Love' was intended to be a comedy. Then we changed some things. The reason for our participation in the workshop was not just project development. One may be a successful, organized producer, but professional education is vital. The workshop has been very useful for me.

"Next year I will apply to GLOBAL EAVE and sit down with professional and successful producers. I do not visit film markets and forums. Now I want to change this attitude. Communication may lead to interesting ideas, projects and contacts. My knowledge is based on local i.e. Russian and Georgian experience in film industry. It is interesting to view and analyze the process globally and to share the European experience".

Archil Gelovani's position is unusual for Georgian reality. The most successful producer assesses his abilities very realistically. This is what I call a professional attitude and not the above-mentioned "universal competence". **fp**

Photo: Anano Asatiani

Film Team work

Do not Put Off till Tuesday What You Can Do on Monday
Manu de Chauvigny

As an introduction, I would like to say what is the most important. Why do we, foreign artists, come to work in Georgia? You have art directors with their original vision and better awareness of their country, city, history. We have our experience. Of course we all know that for a long time cinema was inexistent in Georgia. This has had certain consequences. We arrive not to deprive anyone of his job, but to arrange a meeting of two colleagues working on the same film. This is a synthesis of their visions. In this way work is organized differently.

My arrival in Georgia and my links with this country are due to Otar Iosseliani. "Butterfly Hunt" was our first joint work. He liked my style of working and asked me to continue cooperating on "Brigands". The film had two financiers – France and Germany, therefore, it was quite natural for a French artist to participate in the film.

For Otar, as for every emigrant, it was very important to bring his colleagues and friends to Georgia and show them this country of great film traditions, which are currently being revived.

It was very important for Otar to show his friends the richness of Georgian culture, Georgian people and his native city, Tbilisi. It was an extremely interesting visit and we discovered Georgia with the help of Otar.

This time I arrived to Georgia to attend a photo festival and meet people I have worked with. I have other personal interests too.

I met Tornike Eristavi, a professor of French, a very nice person whom I met while shooting "Brigands". Later he was my translator while shooting Julie Bertuccelli's film "Since Otar Left".

In a film, the chief artist-decorator serves both the story and the director who has invented the story. The artist reads the story and decides what can be imagined as decoration. He may select many colors, or he may reject colors altogether. In certain cases there is no focus on concrete time or country, and the artist has to "invent" a certain country... Then he has to show everything to the director and offer his version. At the same time, every film has its décor, and this décor is created by the art director.

Some film directors are authoritarian. They know very precisely what story they are going to tell and they need a decorator to illustrate this story. Otar is one such director.

Later, as the director agrees with our imagination, observation starts. For example we want to shoot a house and show a family living there. We go and search for such house. If we find one, we try to persuade the owners to move to another place for the period of shooting (in our countries, special attention is paid to appropriate compensation to the people who let the house). We are able to tidy the house, paint it and arrange decorations necessary for the film.

Parallel to observation, we create documents and the concept. This process helps create the entire dossier about the story to be told by the film.

If the theme is historical, one has to search archives to find facts pertaining to the given period. One has to obtain as much information as possible to enrich the visual side and make it easier for the director to tell the story visually. Later, one elaborates a concept, creates a dossier with photos and details like the texture of curtains, tissues etc. Apart from the director, this dossier is useful for lighters, chief director of photography and everyone – it tells them what has to be done and how.

Some film directors are authoritarian. They know very precisely what story they are going to tell and they need a decorator to illustrate this story

For instance, when I arrived in Georgia, I met a Georgian artist and decorator, Vazha Jalaghania, with whom I cooperated on the film "Since Otar Left" (2002) and Iosseliani's latest film "Chantrapas" (2009). My Georgian colleague introduced me to other people, including a carpenter and a sculptor. We collaborate with these people to identify the details, conditions and opportunities for shooting.

When everything is agreed, the teamwork starts. The team is responsible for the collection of the necessary documents.

This is preparatory work that precedes the shooting. At the shooting stage we need prop providers. The first two days of shooting are prepared in advance to avoid holdups. Meanwhile, we get prepared for the following shooting days.

At this stage details gain supreme importance. In Georgia, our main problem is details. They have to be put in place. In Georgia things are frequently done at the last moment. It always ends happily and everything goes well, but at the cost of great stresses and worries.

When one shoots a film in Georgia for the first time, one is scared, not knowing where things may lead. When you shoot your second film, everything is clear, as you know there is nothing impossible and you can find all kinds of objects and furniture. Simply, there is one problem- people often fail to realize they shouldn't put off till Tuesday what they can do on Monday.

The role of the chief decorator is to give the team a sense of rhythm, i.e. the rhythm of contemporary European filmmaking. In the working process this rhythm is pleasant. In order to achieve this, it is important to struggle. Georgian film authorities should understand that the people involved in shooting should receive appropriate payment.

Frequently people think that shooting in Georgia is cheap. In this case it is hard to ask the professionals you collaborate with to arrive at 6 in the morning, stay until 11 and work for peanuts.

Against the backdrop of the great changes in your country, changes should be made in filmmaking as well. For instance, you should open a bureau providing information on film professionals. That way, when a foreign director or decorator arrives in Georgia, they will have a possibility to meet people and select local crew members.

Many professions have gradually become extinct in Georgia. 16 years ago, when I was working on "Brigands", the Georgian Film studio was in a much better situation. Now there is a bureau of modern standards, but there are no workshops with decorators, constructors, carpenters and so on, which are absolutely necessary.

When we arrive, we cooperate with production companies. They seem to work as companies, but in fact they are one-man structures rather than associations. Therefore, they should be more systemic and institutional.

A good film school issuing diplomas should be established in Georgia. Suppose there is a carpenter. He has to specialize in a film-related profession necessary for decoration. I mean there is a shortage of technical staff (providers of props, accessories, lights etc), to say nothing of cameramen and sound engineers.

While working on "Chantrapas" the decorations were constructed at the Georgian Film studio, but there was an independent enterprise not related to filmmaking. In such cases you have little time to teach craftsmen what is necessary for filmmaking.

One of the reasons for the above-mentioned deficit is that only a few films have been made in Georgia recently. With the increase in the quantity of films, there will be higher demand for film professionals. When there is no demand, there are no professionals.

P.S. We would like to say special thanks to Ms. Irma Inaridze who enabled our meeting with Mr. Chauvigny and translated his speech for us.

>> Lela Ochiauri

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

Lomer Akhvlediani: "In the Past, Shooting Was Like a Party, Now It Is Routine and Work"

His camera has captured: a poetic metaphor – a dying horse in a poppy field in Tengiz Abuladze's "The Wishing Tree"; Bukhuti Zakariadze's brilliant role in the short film "Kvevri"; the life of shepherds in black-and-white strict and poetic "White Caravan"; poor aristocrats in "Samanishvili's Stepmother"; Inokenti Smoktunovski's last look in "White Holiday"; Eldar Ryazanov's post-Soviet pensioners (performed by Lyudmila Gurchenko, Lia Akhedjakova, Irina Kupchenko) and Dochanashivli's strangely-speaking characters in Nino Akhvlediani's film "Besame"...

Lomer Akhvlediani is a brilliant director of photography whose unique style is imprinted on numerous films. He is a representative of the famous generation of the 1960s. His first steps were blessed by Tengiz Abuladze. Akhvlediani's films facilitated the choice of profession for the coming generations. At present he remains faithful to cinema in Moscow, yet, he hopes to shoot films in Georgia too.

fp Every film professional writes his biography anew with the help of the screen. What was the reason for your choice? Why photography and not film-directing?

There are many unexpected things in life. I am a geologist by profession. After graduating from the Polytechnical Institute I worked at the Institute of Paleontology and had already written my PhD thesis. However, photography and films completely changed my life. From the very beginning I was attracted by the humanities: cinema, theater, literature, painting... The cultural atmosphere in Tbilisi in the 1960s influenced my choice. Otar Tskvitinidze, who had a photo lab, played an important role. In this lab I learnt how to compose frames by means of photography. Tito Kalatozishvili took me to the shooting of Tengiz Abuladze's "I, Grandmother, Iliko and Ilarion", where he worked as director of photography. Working with the famous director (as assistant director of photography), getting acquainted with his refined style, the atmosphere on the set - all this led to my choice to abandon geology and become a director of photography...

fp However, there was no institute of cinematography in the 1960s in Tbilisi. In order to become a professional film-mak-

Photo: personal archive

er, one had to study at VGIK in Moscow... Probably you did the same.

Despite significant cinematographic traditions, there was no established school of cinema in Tbilisi. Therefore, in 1965 I passed entrance exams in VGIK, Moscow. Later I continued working with Tengiz Abuladze. I mean his film "Prayer" which played a decisive role in my life.

fp What was your first independent work? What do you recall with regard to this film?

It was the short film "Kvevri", my yearly project at VGIK. For its director, Irakli Kvirikadze, who also studied at VGIK, it was a diploma work. The script was written by Rezo Gabriadze, who was making his first steps in cinema. Gia Kancheli's music and Bukhuti Zakariadze's acting also contributed greatly to the success of the film. At that time I did not understand the importance of this film for the further development and style of Georgian short films. As for my first full-length film, it was a joint work of Tamaz Meliava and Eldar Shengelaia, "White Caravan". We shot the film in rather unfavorable conditions. The mixture of strict atmosphere, documentary expression and poetic cinematography led to wonderful results. When I watch this film years later, I don't feel ashamed...

fp And yet, you went on working with Tengiz Abuladze...

In 1972 Tengiz Abuladze made a film called "Adornment for the Mistress", based on a story by Abu-Bakar. I think the film has been forgotten unjustly. One of the main characters was performed by Nani Bregvadze. It was her first serious work in cinema. This film is special for me, as it was my first attempt to abstain from using artificial light. When I informed Tengiz Abuladze about this decision, he readily agreed. Thus, the film was shot in a natural environment, and the light became an artistic peculiarity. At the USSR Film Festival I was awarded a prize for "Innovative Attitude" for this film. This was a huge stimulus for me.

fp It is always hard to select a crew in such a way that everyone is satisfied. Many things depend on the personality of a director and his ability to plan and implement the creative process properly. You must have worked with a crew in which people had their whims. What were the difficulties in your relations with directors? Which director have you found most comfortable to work with?

It may be less important abroad, but friendly human relationships and contacts (so natural for Georgians) are extremely important in a crew. I have worked a lot in Russia and I still do, but I have never had such interesting and perfect relations with anyone as I had with Tengiz Abuladze and Eldar Shengelaia. Director of photography Tito Kalatozishvili and film director Tengiz Abuladze are my teachers. It has been great pleasure to work with Eldar Shengelaia. Cooperation with Rezo Chkheidze while shooting "Don Quixote" was interesting but a bit difficult. I felt at ease while shooting Lana Ghoghoberidze's "Fuss in Salkhineti" in Telavi. I can also recall some less

Nani Bregvadze and Erosi Mandjgaladze; Eldar Shengelaya and Lomer Akhvlediani

Photo: personal archive

comfortable crews, but I hate conflicts and always did my best to avoid them. I think I should not recall unpleasant details now. The main thing is the fruit of the collective work jointly created by a crew.

fp A director of photography, like an art director, script-writer, composer or sound director, depends to a great extent on the director of the film – his viewpoints, taste, style and perception, sometimes even rhythm. Have you ever felt "envious" when only the director of the film was mentioned as the author of a film?

Well, when we choose a profession, we should understand what our obligation is. We should be aware of the fact that the key figure in a film is its director, especially with regard to author's films. When I was working on Temur Palavandishvili's "Autumn Sun", I couldn't have imagined that it would be a kind of portrait of old Tbilisi with unique images by Lado Gudiashvili and Elene Akhvlediani. Initially the director had a totally different vision of this film. Now, when I arrive in Tbilisi, I look at the districts where the shooting took place. I ask carefully whether those houses and streets are still retained. Obviously, urbanization has changed many things. However, we should retain the image of old Tbilisi and treat old and unique buildings with special care.

fp What is more important in the relations between a film director and director of photography – creative freedom or professional subordination?

That's individual. There are different directors and forms of relations. In certain cases subordination plays an important role in the timely completion of shooting. In some cases it is vice versa - innovations and adventurism are necessary. With Rezo Chkheidze one has to be balanced and keep a certain distance. He develops the script in advance and dislikes improvisation. Eldar Shengelaia has good musical ear and sings wonderfully. When we worked on "Samanishvili's Stepmother", he would take me to the set in his car singing all the way. This encouraged me and filled me with creative energy. With Lana Ghoghoberidze I felt complete freedom, whereas with my daughter Nino Akhvlediani ("Besame") I felt a huge sense of responsibility, much more than while cooperating with famous and experienced directors.

fp Sometimes a creative tandem of a director and director of photography lasts for decades. There are numerous examples in the history of cinema. Suffice it to remember Edward Tise – Sergey Eisenstein; Gabriel Figueroa – Louis Bunuel; Sven Nykvist – Ingmar Bergman; Sasha Verni-Alain Resnais; Gregory Rerberg – Andrei Tarkovskiy, etc. What is the reason for such longstanding links? Is it a creative impulse or personal features?

Relationships in a crew are always complicated. However, the film unites everyone. As a rule, people have different inner rhythms and diverse communication skills. Yet, the choice is made by the director. If we take it for granted that freedom is the main thing for art, it is better to cooperate with directors with various styles.

On the other hand, finding a common language with a director, having mutual understanding and good relations mean economy of time and energy, and this is a luxury. Sometimes such devoted crews are large and include actors, script-writers, art directors, directors of photography, composers etc. They seemlessly move from one film to another. This is the case with Fellini, Bergman, Fassbinder or Nikita Mikhalkov. I had to work with totally different directors, but this does not imply either any fault or merit.

fp Your children are in the film profession too. Nino Akhvlediani is a direc-

Frunzik Mkrtchyan, Vakhtang Kikabidze and Lomer Akhvlediani; Lomer Akhvlediani and Eldar Shengelaya

tor, Archil Akhvlediani is a director of photography.

Is it your influence or they took this decision independently?

I did not interfere directly. However, the atmosphere of constant shooting and movements from set to set has influenced my family. My wife, Nana Avalishvili, is a brilliant pianist, but her career was affected by my shooting rhythm and family matters. The influence on Archil is logical: for any little boy father is an example to follow. However, I have not advised him to choose this profession. I think he is a good director of photography.

When Levan Koghuashvili's "Street Days" were screened in Moscow, everyone congratulated me and made special mention of Archil's contribution to this film. They thought the film was made on Kodak, whereas in fact it was digital. But the quality was so good that people did not guess the difference. Nino failed to pass exams at the Department of Film Direction of Tbilisi State University of Theater and Cinema. But she was very eager to become a director. So next year she entered the Moscow Institute of Cinema and became Marlen Khutsiev's student. The film I shot with her is, in my opinion, one of my best works. I mean "Besame" which is based on the famous story "Water Polo", by Guram Dochanashvili.

fp Recent development of technology has brought marvelous changes in cinema. Digital technology has changed everything. The image on film is gradually disappearing. You are used to working in a different reality. What are the advantages and disadvantages of digital cinema?

The most important feeling today is that cinema is gradually disappearing and depreciating. Today there is not a problem getting a film (as quality images can be achieved by means of digital camera), but films are no longer "hand-made" products. Technology is not an end in itself, it is only an additional facility. Yet, technology seems to dictate directors and actors what to do. Young directors do not have to run about in search of film, install a system of light and overcome organizational problems. This is good, but the loss of cinema is apparent. Some people think that elementary handling of a digital camera and pressing a button may lead to the same quality image as hard work and many years' experience of a director of photography.

fp Do you think television is the antithesis of cinema? What is the main difference between film and television images?

People talk about this all the time. However, it is a fact that earlier the shooting of a film seemed like a party, and now it is routine and work. Now films are very expensive. The director has no opportunity to think about what he has to shoot and how. Author cinema is gradually replaced by producers. These days, a decisive role is played by producers and not film directors or directors of photography.

fp Do you plan to come to Georgia and make a new film? Are there any offers in this regard?

I used to say and I still repeat: if film-production and film-financing are not enhanced in Georgia, the current difficult situation will not change. Nobody is happy to emigrate and work abroad. The younger generation should be able to achieve creative realization and work in normal conditions. The film traditions of Georgia and the great love of people towards cinema fill me with optimism. But film professionals should make quality "hand-made" products.

>> Davit Bukhrikidze

"The Godfather" of Film Sound
Interview with Mark Berger

Marc Berger (the winner of 4 Oscars for the films "Apocalypse Now", "Amadeus", "The Right Stuff", "The English Patient") belongs to the generation of Northern California filmmakers of the 1970s who gathered around Francis Ford Coppola and made numerous innovations in the industry. His refined, quiet manner still distinguishes Berger from his contemporary colleagues. His love for teaching has brought him to Georgia, and for three months now he has been lecturing to Georgian students.

fp You teach in Berkley. Why Berkley and not New York or LA?

Berkley has a film department focusing on history and analysis, criticism and theory. It has nearly no filmmaking courses and is entirely academic. Several times I attended lectures of a professor who gives academic lectures on sound direction. They were impressed when I explained how sound is made in reality and what factors motivate the director when he takes decisions regarding sound.

About 11 years ago they asked me to unite a 4-term course on sound which would be partly industrial and partly academic. Thus, I had to work in two fields: academic teaching and film industry. By means of academic-aesthetic analysis I had to explain how film music is created in real life.

I teach in Berkley because I live there. I am not fond of LA, and out of my 167 films only two were made there. The rest were made in North California. Besides, I teach there because I was asked to [laughs].

fp Is it interesting to teach in Berkley? Why is the academic and theoretical side more important for you than the practical side?

It is more interesting because it is new for me. I know a lot about the technical side, and only 20-30% of it is interesting. If you ask an author how a typist works, he will say it is not interesting for him. It is just a tool. Therefore, the interesting thing for me is how and why sound is used, what reactions it causes, how to explain to students the new ideas of seeing the film and show them the absolutely different world beyond image. The students are unaware of what they hear. They have no professional vocabulary or concept. They write about music, but they don't know why there is music. So I give them the vocabulary and the concept to describe sound, think about it and understand how music is adjusted to concrete images and pictures.

...You know, when one has made 167 films, won four Academy awards and is working on the 168th film, the practical side is not so interesting [laughs].

Every year I teach a new group of students consisting of 25-45 people. I am fascinated by the very first class, as I see new, interested students with shining eyes. It means a lot to me when I imagine the 3-4 months I am to spend with them and I observe how their perception of a film changes. I really enjoy working with youngsters.

fp You have been in Tbilisi for more than a month now. What is your impression of Georgian students? Do they perceive the issue in depth and are they interesting to work with?

As I arrived I did not know what to expect. The University was not sufficiently equipped for me to teach as I used to. Therefore, we moved to Georgian Film and I started lecturing in the former sound studio. I had expected a different classroom environment where I would be able to teach and show films, and have enough time for all this.

As for the students, first I was surprised at their manner of attendance. First came 15-16 students. Then only 7-10 attended

Photo: Dato Janelidze

regularly. In the beginning of the course I gave them an assignment, so let's see how many of them manage to do it.

It became more interesting when we discussed connections with the country's historical, cultural and social period in which they were brought up. They tried to analyze films, came close to the idea of films and discussed coincidences between their mentality and the ideas in films. It turned out that girls aged below 20 are more attentive and interested in what I explain; they participate more actively and ask clever questions. They grasp the concept better than male students. Probably, as they grew up during the war period in 1990-1992, they suffered both culturally and physically.

This affected their experience and the ability to think more deeply and concretely. Some of them have difficulties in understanding impressionist, open ideas and artistic interpretations. They grasp realistic interpretations more easily. The most interesting students are those who have traveled to Europe, the USA and other countries. They have a broader vision of the world and have acquired new facts and ways of thinking about films. They are aware of cultural differences and know more about various work ethics, professionalism, obligations, etc. I think this is a better attitude for study and work.

fp You once mentioned that the number of formats for films has decreased. Nowadays when it is possible to watch films by various media, e.g. the internet, is it possible that the form of film as screen image will change?

I am sure different films will be created for different formats. However, the experience of collective watching of films on a large screen will remain. At least, I hope so. The experience of watching a film with about 300 people in the theater is completely different from that of watching alone on TV or a computer. The worst case is when someone watches "The Godfather" on his iPhone on a bus stop. Films for large screen have always been created differently than those for TV. Now there is YouTube, where films are loaded for the internet. Their duration is mostly 5-6 minutes. I will not be surprised if this develops visually. Probably in 5-6 years sound will also develop and people will pay attention to it.

fp Being in Georgia, you watched several Georgian films and met some directors. Have you discovered anything of interst?

For me, a film is an interesting expression of culture and its unique aspects. Some films made by the younger generation are interesting from the cultural point of view. It seems they try to find their way to integrate in film history based on Georgian culture. The most interesting films created by the younger generation are those made by women who have lived and worked in different countries. However, the films are still young and need to be developed further, although the ideas are precise and the younger generation is following the right path. They make attempts to unite visual, sound and cultural ideas and the manner of narration. Georgian filmmakers have overcome great hardships and managed to make films in Georgia. I respect this and I am sure the younger generation will grow into mature professionals.

fp You have cooperated with numerous famous directors. What film was the most interesting for you?

"Apocalypse Now" was very interesting. It took 2 years to make this film. For one year we recorded all new sounds, in fact, we occupied new domains in the use of sound and this equaled a lifelong experience [Marc Berger got his first OSCAR for Sound Innovation]. Working on "Amadeus" was pleasant and satisfying. What can be better than spending a month listening to Mozart's music. Working with David Lynch on "Blue Velvet" was very interesting too. He is an interesting person. He interfered in the minutest details and finally came to brilliant ideas. He was open to innovations. He is extremely warm and friendly, but beyond his warm glance there is a madman, a self-controlled madman of course. He is a real painter. All this made work with him very interesting indeed.

fp Do you think the time of best films, music and art in general is over?

I belong to the generation of the 1960s. I grew up in San Francisco – the cradle of political and creative revolution at that time. In my opinion, the new wave of European directors and American directors like Scorsese, Coppola, Forman and those who experimented and integrated in cultural expression will not repeat. I cannot speak competently about painting, but I think expression in painting is moss-grown. There is a writer Tom Wolfe, author of "The Painted Word", where he says art should be interpreted by others, same as religion, where one cannot speak directly to God, and the priest has to interpret God's words. When this took place, art became separated from people who were influenced by it. We spoke of what it was instead of understanding what it was. This lasted for a while. I cannot say the same about literature. It continues to develop and numerous deep and important books have been written.

fp Is there a similar problem with regard to music?

You, as a young person, have to tell me that, because you will have to listen to modern music with the ear of a person who grew up after you... What do you think of music beginning from the 60s till today?

fp I am not fond of pop music, but when one listens to music he has to feel it in every way, be it jazz, classical music, rock, electronic music, etc. The valuable works will always remain and the poor ones will soon become outdated.

This does not answer the question about the change in music. How do you react to the change?

fp The rhythm and harmony have changed completely. I think they are lost in contemporary pop music.

What has been lost?

fp Inspiration as part of personality. Now the focus is on the visual side and not on the sound...

(I realize how easily he reversed the dialogue. Is this my interview?)...

>> Dato Janelidze, Tamta Khelaia

Film Image Engineer
Interview with Wouter Zoon

The famous Georgian director Rezo Esadze once said about art directors: "Nature knows seven colors, but there are countless colors in the film. There are as many colors in a film as there are emotions aroused in a spectator. The art director makes the basis for the film's visual side, he does not create color but greatly contributes to its creation..." This quote certainly applies to Dutch art director Wouter Zoon. By profession he is product engineer, but when he realized he wanted to build his own universe, he started working as art director. Thus, he has created his universes in collaboration with such famous directors as Aki Kaurismaki, Michael Haneke, Otar Iosseliani and Francois Ozon. Now he has collaborated with Zaza Rusadze on the film "The Fold of My Blanket", and he says confidently that the film will be good... This is the only interview with Wouter Zoon published in printed media.

fp In the internet I was unable to find any interviews with you. Is it that you dislike journalists, or do journalists ignore you?

Our work always remains beyond the stage. Neither journalists nor the spectators are aware of us. Mostly the media is passive and for many years no one has asked me to give an interview.

fp Can you name the film which was a source of inspiration for you as art director?

There are several films, e.g. Jean-Pierre Melville's "Samurai". Frankly speaking, I'm not a great admirer of Alain Delon, but the film is really worth attention, especially with regard to the impressive work of the art director, which can be proved by the very first frame of the film.

fp What is easier for an art director – making black-and-white or color films?

Of course, black-and-white cinema is easier. Some may think art directors need to expend more effort in black-and-white cinema to make details vivid on the general background. However, it is vice-versa – there are more opportunities to concentrate on concrete details and avoid disturbances. In a black-and-white film, grey may turn into blue. Thus, for an art director a black-and-white film is a space for endless experiments.

fp Do you ever envy your colleagues who work on high-budget science fiction films and have more opportunities to implement their fantasy to the utmost?

Not in the least. You may be working on a low-budget film with modest technical facilities and, at the same time, implement your objectives and meet the goal of the director. Besides, working on a high-budget film is stressful. I often observe my colleagues working in a neurotic environment, so I don't want to die of a heart attack at the age of 50. I have a family and live in a cozy environment. This is quite sufficient for me. I am 100% confident that money does not mean happiness.

fp Yet, working on a high-budget film is often the sole chance for an art director to appear on the stage, as high-budget film art directors are even more popular with the audience than their directors. Suffice it to mention "Harry Potter".

Of course as an artist I have my

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

I have a family and live in a cozy environment. This is quite sufficient for me. **I am 100% confident that money does not mean happiness**

ambitions, and I would be willingly to work on large-scale projects. But, as I mentioned above, there are unpleasant factors, like stress and health problems, therefore I keep my distance. I don't want to fall victim to stressful projects. Besides, blockbusters are not created only by directors and art directors. These films largely depend on actors, who form basis for the film's success. In my case, the director and I place reality in a certain frame and discuss what universe we should create in a film. It does not matter whether you work on a high-budget or a low-budget film. Eventually, any film will appear on the screen. The screen is the only space where our work can be evaluated. Nowadays there is a deficit of good stories. Films often use many unnecessary details. In Aki Kaurismaki's film "Le Havre" a character holding a glass of beer is enough to make us understand that he is in a bar.

fp Which directors were the most pleasant and memorable?

This is an embarrassing question. Probably- Pascal Bonitzer, who is my favorite director. I have worked on nearly all of his films. I also enjoyed working with Jacques Rivette. Twice in the 1990s I worked with Claude Mourieras and I enjoyed it tremendously. Currently he works on documentaries.

fp Have you ever worked on commercials?

A little bit and long ago. I was never interested in advertising. In this process your creative work is discussed collectively. Numerous alterations are made and your initial idea reaches the screen only to a certain extent. However, I might return to advertising if there is an interesting offer. There may be some interesting offer in Georgia, too. I'm joking of course... In a film the art director discusses his ideas only with the director. So one creates a film based on his own ideas and viewpoints. I abstain from advertising also for moral reasons. Anyway, no one has offered me to make commercials. I might have agreed if I had been in need of money. Everything has its price.

fp What is more interesting for an art director – working on psychological portraits and psychological drama characteristic of Haneke, or in the surrealistic genre characteristic of Ozon?

The main thing is the idea. Both kinds of work are interesting for an artist. Ozon is not surrealistic, on the contrary, he is quite realistic. In any case, the film "Swimming-Pool", on which I worked, is absolutely realistic. As for Haneke, he sets each detail, and this makes it difficult to work with him. He refuses to change what his imagination has created. You may offer him an idea, but Haneke ignores it, even if it is good for the film. Thus, Haneke is not comfortable for an art director. He is like a dictator and uses the principle of "iron" script. He never deviates from the subject line, even in the minutest details. Never. Each line is drawn with mathematic precision. An artist in such situation resembles an ordinary craftsman.

fp What was your reaction when Aki Kaurismaki's "Le Havre" failed to win in Cannes?

I think the prizes were not awarded fairly. It was very strange. I was surprised that "Le Havre" got only the FIPRESCI prize. We expected more.

fp How did you meet Zaza Rusadze?

I met him when I worked on Otar Ioseliani's "Chatrapas". Before starting to cooperate with directors, I usually watch their previous works to get an idea of the potential. With Zaza, I made an exception and trusted my intuition. By the way, I have seen his documentary film on the history of the Public Broadcaster, ordered by PIK TV. It is an exciting and highly professional work. Therefore, I hope "The Fold of My Blanket" will be successful for Zaza, director of photography Goga Devdariani and me.

fp You are an art director. But in the 90s you composed music for a film. Have you ever thought of becoming a director?

Direction is very complicated. The working process always involves conflicts. The entire crew has to obey the director's diktat. I am a peaceful and polite person, so I cannot shout at actors, directors of photography, etc.

>> Giorgi Kalatozishvili

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili

An Unknown Film Story
Interview with painter Manana Tsivtsivadze

The inspiration of Bajbeuk-Melikov and Gudiashvili, Georgian beauty Manana Tsivtsivadze cannot be imagined outside the film set. But paradoxically, she has worked on films behind the camera. She has been fortunate enough to work with Akira Kurosawa. Ever since she was sixteen she wanted to be a film director. She started painting at an early age and graduated from the Georgian State Academy of Art, but she always wished to direct films. Therefore, she went to Moscow and attended a two-year course.

Her diploma enabled her work at Mosfilm as an assistant art director. At that time her friend's husband worked in Moscow and advised her to cooperate with a group of Japanese filmmakers led by Akira Kurosawa himself. Kurosawa had recently been in a vulnerable place. After the creative and commercial failure of "Dodes'ka-den", Kurosawa attempted suicide on December 22, 1971. Fortunately, he failed. At that time many people had doubts about the director's future career.

Two years later, Mosfilm offered Kurosawa a joint project. Since the 1930s Kurosawa had wanted to make a film based on "Dersu Uzala", a book by Russian scientist and explorer Vladimir Arsenyev. Cooperation with Mosfilm was a precondition for the fulfillment of this wish. In December 1973, the 63-year-old Kurosawa brought his crew to Moscow, where Manana Tsivtsivadze had the opportunity to cooperate with him on the film "Dersu Uzala". She says of the experience:

- It was very hard. Kurosawa was extremely demanding. I had no time to think. I simply knew I was lucky to work with a great director. One time, they were unable to finish a scene as they expected a tiger to be brought. Kurosawa was sad. Then he disappeared. The entire Mosfilm studio searched for him in vain. They asked me where he was and I suggested he might have gone to the hotel. They said Kurosawa did not know the way and had no money. However, as I had guessed, they found him at the hotel. That was his character. If he did not like something, he just left. He often postponed shooting and thought for a long time. Nobody could understand the reason for the delay in shooting. He was, to a certain extent, a perfectionist.

A descentant of the Samurai, Akira Kurosawa initially wanted to become a painter. Due to lack of money he had to change his career plans, but he never abandoned painting. A large album of Kurosawa's paintings is kept at the apartment of Manana Tsivtsivadze. This album is signed by the great director. Kurosawa often interfered in the work of the art director. Each frame had to be construed with great care and precision. However, he allowed actors great creative freedom. He was dissatisfied with the strict working schedule of Mosfilm. He wanted to work 24 hours a day. The crew had to follow Kurosawa's schedule. Due to the locations, the shootings were hard. Eventually, "Dersu Uzala" brought success to the great director. In 1976 the film was awarded the Oscar for the best Foreign Film.

Manana Tsivtsivadze has never worked on films since then. But she does not regret it. She attended the shootings of "Musicians" by her friend Misha Kobakhidze and even created a poster for this film. However, she continued working in the field of painting. "Probably there is more of a painter in me", she says. Her decision was motivated by one incident:

- Much depends on the circumstances. in 1975 "Dersu Uzala" was awarded the Golden Prize at the ninth Moscow film festival. Some Polish people sat beside our crew at the awards ceremony. Among them was a wonderful film director, Kawalerowicz. We got acquainted and he advised me to turn to painting and I believed him, although I don't know why. Misha Kobakhidze was a friend of mine. He suffered a lot. His films were often banned [by the Soviet authorities], and I thought I would also have difficulties if I continued working on films. That's why I decided to abandon filmmaking.

She says she is not nostalgic for films and painting is her only interest. As we walk around her apartment, we see paintings created in various periods. She mostly makes large canvases, although miniatures are also frequent. Her themes are diverse, her manner is pastose, energetic, and abundant in color. Painting is a sense of life for her. Unlike at the film set, in painting she works alone and gets more pleasure from it. She has had exhibitions in the USA, Switzerland and Austria. She hopes to exhibit her works in Tbilisi too.

After treating us to Karkade tea, showing her works and speaking about her memories, Manana presented us with her albums and wished us good luck. As I left her place, I was excited, trying to remember everything she said and to retain the emotions caused by this visit. I was eager to share them with people, as many are unaware of this interesting and unusual film story.

>> Tamuna Lolua

Photo: Khatuna Khutsishvili; personal archive

The First Georgian Woman – Director of Photography in Italian Cinema
Interview with Natia Japaridze

She carries a 25kg camera to the set and her hands often ache from carrying 45-meter film. In everyday life she is a charming lady, Natia Japaridze, who has dedicated 16 years of her life to the Italian film industry.

fp As far as I know, you graduated from the NUCT Institute at Cinecitta with the specialty of director of photography. This film school is one of the best in Europe...

Yes, I had wonderful professors – Giuseppe Pinori, who had worked with Pasolini and shot the first films of Nanni Moretti. Also Daniele Nanuzi who created great films in the Soviet Union together with his father Armando Nanuzi: "Peter the Great", "War and Peace"; also Alessandro Gallara, director of photography of Gabriele Salvatores. I learnt a lot from these people. Besides, I had an opportunity for practice. As soon as I became a student, I started working as a video assistant. My first work was a 7-series film by the Manetti brothers. We shot it on film. In the same period I made digital shootings of several short films. Next year I moved to 16 mm film. After graduation I was lucky enough to use 35 mm film on Paolo Baldi's film. The shootings took place in the region of Alto Adige, Trentino Mountains. We spent the entire winter with shepherds. It was hard work. The 35 mm film scarred my hands.

fp This profession is probably hard for a woman?

I keep asking myself why I chose this profession, which is thought to be an exclusively male one. I wake up at 4 or 5

Photo: personal archive

in the morning, go to mountains, deserts, water reservoirs... I live in the open air for months and even years. One has to be strong to bear all this. Often I had to shoot in the water and caught cold. However, I cannot quit, probably because I am simply in love with the profession.

fp Is this profession usual for Italian women?

There are female directors of photography only in France and the USA. There are a maximum of 15 women in Italy who have worked as first assistants. They are old now. One has to pass several stages to become "Direttore della fotografia". In its classical sense, there is no such profession in Georgia. There is a director of photography and an art director. In Italy this specialty unites both, meaning a technical director for the film. First you are a video assistant and deal with transportation and installing the equipment. Then one becomes a loader – a person who controls the film, places it into the camera and later places the shot film into boxes. Then one becomes the second assistant and works on the second camera. Only after this does one become the first assistant - the so-called focus fuller who controls everything. In Italy, it takes about 15-20 years to pass through all these stages.

fp What can you say about contemporary Italian films? One prominent critic, Aldo Tassone, calls this period "an epoch of dead fish"...

Now there is a severe crisis. Berlusconi is not fond of cinema and has no desire to support it. In 2009 television started to govern cinema. The prime-minister rules over all kinds of broadcasting, therefore media is a priority and money is spent on it. Today the main disease is the TV series. They have completely devoured the film industry. Dull and low quality soap operas occupy the entire television space and deteriorate the taste of the audience.

fp However, Italian films participate in international festivals. How do the directors manage to work in these conditions?

There was a period when Hollywood actively used Cinecitta pavilions. After the crisis started, these pavilions were rented by television studios and the film industry died. These days, Italian directors travel to shoot in Bulgaria, Ukraine, Africa and countries where the labor force is cheap. They hire local staff. This situation is detrimental for the younger generation. They are unable to pass through the stages necessary for professional development. Several years ago about 50 films were made per year. Now they make about 15-20 films. I think serious reforms are necessary. Above all, Italian cinema is in need of promotion. Suffice it to remember the success of Italian films in the period of great producers - Dino de Laurentis, Carlo Ponti and Alberto Grimaldi. Nowadays producers are interested in money rather than the quality of films. The attitude is commercial rather than creative. Even the famous directors who continue the tradition of Italian cinema - Nani Moretti, Gabriele Muccino, Michele Placido, Gabriele Salvatores, Paolo Virzi - make films once in four years.

fp You worked with one of those directors – Giuseppe Tornatore, who manages brilliantly to continue the old traditions of Italian cinema and also creates international films...

His works are diverse. He created a series on his beloved Sicily (Il Camorista, Nuovo Cinema Paradiso, Malena, Baaria). At the same time, he made films that are completely different from his usual style (1900 - La Leggenda del Pianista, La Sconosciuta, Una Pura Formalita).

He is an aesthete, and this is vividly clear in every frame of his films, their environment, music, actors... His way of selecting actors is also unusual. He always searches for unknown names and often invites actors from provincial theaters. For example, his latest film "Baaria", with a model Margeret Made, and Francesco Scianna, who earlier used to perform only bit parts. Instead, stars like Monica Belucchi, Raoul Bova, Angela Molina and Michele Placido performed only minor parts.

fp With "Baaria", Tornatore returned to his childhood. Please tell us about the shooting of this film.

Baaria is his village in Sicily. It is an autobiographic film about his grandfather, father and himself. In fact, the film reflects three periods, and this made it difficult to work on the film. The shootings continued for nearly a year. The total budget comprised 30 million Euros. Some of the shooting took place in Sicily, the other part in Tunisia, where an entire village was built especially for this film. The film had two directors of photography – Enrico Lucidi in Tunisia and Ugo Menegatti in Sicily. I was the first assistant of Ugo Menegatti. I remember Tornatore was surprised at seeing me on the set. A female director of photography seemed strange to him. He asked me why I had chosen such hard work. I answered that I was a painter and cinema was a continuation of painting for me. I said I did not know what would be better for me in the future, but at the time I was satisfied with my work. He liked my answer. Later, I was the only person on the set allowed to take photos. As a rule, he doesn't let anyone take photos on the set.

fp How long are you going to stay in Italian cinema? What are your future projects?

I don't know how long I am going to continue this work. As all amateurs of cinema, I look forward to the time when Berlusconi leaves his post and new reforms start. I wish to become an art designer of films later. The make-up, costumes, colors – in the USA one and the same person handles all this. In Italy these are different professions and I would like to unite them. One has to develop all the time. I cannot do the same job for a long time and always search for novelty. The more you do in a certain profession, the more complicated things you want to learn.... From my experience, luck and talent are very important, but much also depends on one's personal features. If, despite obstacles, one tries to move forward, he will achieve success by all means!

>> Beka Elbakidze

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